

SUZANNE COLLINS' *HUNGER GAMES* TRILOGY: HOW SOCIETY  
OF SPECTACLE BRED THE MOCKINGJAY

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Using spectacle to alienate people from each other and life, President Snow's Panem from Collins' *Hunger Games* trilogy is Guy Debord's Society of Spectacle. As Debord predicts, the spectacle of the Annual Hunger Games causes a degradation of life for citizens in the Districts and the Capitol, leading to a society where nobody truly lives and citizens accept the narrative that President Snow and his regime promote about the Games. Using Luis Althusser to understand how President Snow links his power to that of the Games, we understand how the dictator brainwashed his citizens into compliance through his narrative, and also, how this narrative is constantly delivered through the various ISAs and SAs in Panem to degrade life into false unity and false consciousness, socially coercing citizens to fall in line with the narrative around spectacle. Katniss Everdeen is unique as she is too authentic to use her celebrity status in promotion of the Games; instead, she accidentally performs Debord's true critiques, sparking a rebellion through love. Katniss' acts of love translate into true critiques of the spectacle that is Panem and the Games, and because Snow has spent decades brainwashing his populace into a blind acceptance of celebrity and social similarities, Katniss is successful as the Mockingjay through rebellious love. Through Katniss, we see how spectacle can be as self-defeating as it is self-perpetuating.

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## INTRODUCTION

Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games* trilogy is a sci-fi story where technology alienates us from ourselves, and each other, allowing us to be conditioned into complacency so that a dictator can maintain power. The world of Panem is run by President Cornelius Snow, who uses the mass media to brainwash his citizens into complacency with the spectacle called "the Annual Hunger Games." Causing disunity through a false, superficial unity among the Districts and the Capitol, President Snow uses the Annual Hunger Games to stay in power by sowing the discontent it incurs. As Joe Tompkins states, "At the heart of this struggle is the titular 'Hunger Games,' a televised death match" with Tributes "locked into a survivalist competition that hinges on equal parts brand recognition, brutal violence, and audience approval" (Tompkins 71). The Games are meant to keep the Districts fighting each other for resources instead of the Capitol, where authoritarian President Cornelius Snow and his regime reside, but the Annual Hunger Games are more than an abstract event to be witnessed through television as Panem's culture revolves around them. When the Games are not occurring, citizens are constantly bombarded with footage from previous games, and the "Victors" of these games are treated as celebrities in the Capitol, constantly giving interviews to talk show host Caesar Flickerman. The people in the Capitol, and to an extent, even the Districts, mindlessly consume the Hunger Games, which drugs them into complacency with harsh authoritarian rule, while also causing citizens to believe what Pavlik calls the "myth" of the Hunger Games (31). This myth is repeated every year in the Treaty of Treason to the Districts, stating that the Games are a necessary punishment to remind the Districts why the "Dark days must never be repeated" (Collins *Hunger Games* 18). The constant parading of Victors and the prosperity that they bring to their

districts upon winning the Games sends the message that the Games are also an opportunity for Tributes to bring pride to their districts. These cultural narratives about the Games obscure their true, insidious nature as fear tactics (Henthorne 98) (Pavlik 31) towards the Districts. The “Career Districts,” Districts 1 and 2, have fallen in line with Capitol rule and perpetuate this narrative by training some children to happily volunteer to go to their deaths, all in the name of “bringing glory to their districts” (Collins *Hunger Games* 23). The Games succeed in normalizing alienation from life through a disregard for authentic living and loving relationships in favor of status and glory, which is why the figure of Katniss Everdeen is beloved by Panem during the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Hunger Games and beyond. Embodying love and life through her authentic actions in the Reaping and in the Games, Katniss accidentally delivers true critiques of President Snow’s society built around the spectacle that is the Annual Hunger Games, sparking a District rebellion. To keep the rebellion at bay, Snow forces Katniss to use her new celebrity status to sell her’s and Peeta’s unusual win as a “Romeo and Juliet-esque” romance to the public. Snow expects Katniss to keep up this new image, along with her role as a new Victor, however, due to her authentic nature, Katniss is unable to perform either role properly, delivering critiques when she needs to use her celebrity status to endorse the Games, causing a full rebellion.

Situating Collins’ Panem in the *Hunger Games* trilogy as embodying Guy Debord’s work from 1967, *The Society of the Spectacle*, this thesis discusses how the Annual Hunger Games imploded on itself at the end of the series—how spectacle defeats spectacle. Using Debord, we understand that Snow’s society has ultimately caused a degradation of life for all of Panem, from the proletariat Districts to the bourgeoisie Capitol, everyone is alienated from each other and from life itself. As many scholars have pointed out, this alienation from life and between

the classes initially works in President Snow's favor because it causes animosity and competition between classes (Kula 56), which feeds the spectacle of the Annual Hunger Games by providing it with Tributes who are already conditioned to hate each other. Using Althusser, this work also explains how President Snow linked his power as "the State" to the spectacle of the Annual Hunger Games because spectacle is the dominant ideology made material, and in agreement with Helen Day, the spectacle is also a repressive Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) (167). Combining Althusser's theory of ideology with Debord's theory of spectacle, this thesis seeks to situate Panem as embodying Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* to understand how President Snow, as "the State," gains his power through spectacle, and how Katniss is granted the power to destroy him by the very power that enables him. Interestingly, in order to stay in power through this spectacle, Snow must employ more spectacle in the form of another ISA, talk show host Caesar Flickerman, because the Games must seem "fair" to Panem. As an ISA that is embedded in spectacle, Flickerman narrates the events for Panem, granting the Annual Hunger Games, and by extension, Snow, legitimacy in their rule. As an ISA, spectacle must appear impartial and independent of the State, even though it is state sponsored, which is also why the Victors—the "celebrities" of this spectacle—must appear independent of spectacle as well. Understanding how Snow has designed all of Panem to reproduce and legitimize the Annual Hunger Games year after year, we then understand the mechanisms in which an individual gains power through this spectacle—it is a complex conditioning of Panem to accept what it sees on the screen as true through presenting spectacle as the truth in state sponsored ISAs. More importantly, through understanding how Snow gains his power through spectacle, we understand how Katniss is able to turn spectacle around on him through the power of



celebrity winning the Games gives her. Instead of endorsing the spectacle as Debord's celebrities are supposed to do, Katniss endorses love and "true critiques" of the Games. As her true critiques come from a place of sincerity and love, she threatens Snow's society. To curb Katniss' newfound power, Flickerman, Snow, and Cinna make her love part of this populous, rebellious image, and Flickerman attempts Fiske's "naturalization" of this figure only for the "Girl on Fire" to become the Mockingjay. In the end, Katniss succeeds in taking down Snow's society of spectacle through the very language, status, and celebrity image that he and his society of spectacle gave her.

When Debord first wrote *Society*, he was referring to advertisements when he said "spectacle," now, it is accepted that "spectacle" is referring to "mass media"<sup>1</sup>. For Debord, all life revolves around spectacle as does society, and the spectacle is the economy, "For the spectacle is both the *meaning* and the *agenda* of our particular socio-economic formation. It is the historical moment in which we are caught" (Debord 4). "Everything that was directly lived has now receded to mere representation" (Debord 2), which alienates all of life, literally, we are alienated from each other because of spectacle—alienated from humanity and alienated from living life, degrading it. In fact, spectacle has colonized life so completely that it even shapes our lived experiences; "At the same time all individual's reality has become social, in the sense that it is shaped by social forces and is directly dependent on them" (Debord 5). It is no longer about actually possessing or living life, rather, we now live life through economically manufactured "products" that are placed on a screen. These products then condition us into believing the

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically, Briziarelli and Armano said, "mass mediation via emerging new means of communication and the construction of a manipulated collective imagery that replaces reality via advertising" (32).

reality that the particular product is selling. As life has now moved into representation, and “spectacle was born from the world’s loss of unity” (Debord 10), what the spectacle represents and the meaning that the product used to carry has gone from concrete to the unreachable abstract. In this sense, the spectacle brainwashes us to be content with things that we neither need, nor have use for, only for the sake of keeping the now independent spectacle alive, and to replace real socialization with mass media spectacle (Debord 2). Debord’s spectacle is sinister as he suggests, “The spectacle is a permanent opium war designed to force people to equate goods with commodities and to equate satisfaction with a survival that expands according to its own laws” (Debord 17). Having gained a life of its own, and having now colonized all life through alienation, the spectacle creates its own demands in order to reproduce itself (Debord 17). The spectacle is conditioning us to believe that we cannot meet our most basic needs without it, and these needs have been manufactured by the spectacle. This spectacle manufactured survival that celebrity perpetuates is why the masses *accept* a false reality as the real, it “accounts for the general acceptance of the illusions of modern commodity consumption. The real consumer has become a consumer of illusions. The commodity is this materialized illusion and the spectacle is its general expression” (Debord 19). The celebrity’s job is then to specialize “as superficial objects that people can identify with in order to compensate for the fragmented productive specializations that they actually live” (Debord 24). Celebrities are then linked with this consumable survival because their lifestyles sell these necessary illusions to the masses. Therefore, the spectacle brainwashes spectators into absolute obedience through the implied message that the commodity is necessary for survival in this new reality that it created, thus creating false consciousness for the classes. This

is also how spectacle perpetuates itself, through keeping people trapped in its insular ideological world, alienating all classes, especially the proletariat, from their *true* conditions of living. Only a “true critique” can wake spectators up; “The logic of false consciousness, which cannot truly know itself, the search for critical truth about the spectacle must also be a true critique” (Debord 117).

President Snow gained his power through utilizing the mass media as his main ISA to deliver ideology (Althusser 96-97) through the spectacle of the Hunger Games, his locus of power. Since this is his locus of power, it becomes a point of contention when Katniss refuses to kill Peeta in the Games, demanding that the Capitol will have two Victors, or it will have none. Upon doing this, she exposed spectacle with Debord’s “critical truth,” and took the narrative away from Snow, which is a justifiable threat to his power. As we learn that Katniss’ performative defiance in the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games caused a rebellion to spark, she demonstrates how spectacle can be used against the dominant class. Attempting to “naturalize” dissent (Fiske 1270) through his ISAs, like Caesar Flickerman, and make her rebellious image an appropriate part of the dominant culture, Snow attempts to use her celebrity status to push his narrative of Panem through spectacle. However, he fails, and since he is the ultimate gamemaker in this spectacle (Mortimore-Smith 158), Snow creates the 75<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games with the intent to have Katniss killed in a fashion that is deemed legitimate by spectacle.

As the objective of this thesis means to examine Katniss as a commodified subject who is able to impose her own ideology on other subjects through utilizing the agency of celebrity that spectacle granted her, we need to understand why Katniss is unique. Why does the Mockingjay have to be Katniss? The answer is simple, she is authentic in a world of

inauthenticity. Katniss cannot act or be anyone other than herself, which leads to all of the brash, dangerous moments where she could have been killed for accidentally criticizing the Games, but these moments also endear her to the spectators and quickly become part of her image. Katniss' first act as Tribute is volunteering for her sister, and Caesar Flickerman picks up on this quickly, turning her into a tragically heroic tribute who only wants to get back to her sister (Collins *Hunger Games* 129). While in the Games, Katniss eventually realizes how she can manipulate the cameras so that the Capitol is limited in how much they can augment their footage of her. In anger and grief, she "buries" fellow Tribute, Rue, in flowers. A small display of grief with dire consequences as this act marked a series of "firsts" within the Games, establishing a historic time on which rebels can agitate. Katniss is special in the sense that her humanity is able to touch people in Panem, transcending class and space, destroying the spectacle, and Snow only made her reach more expansive when he gave her the celebrity status of "Victor." "The Games and Victory Tours are compulsory television viewing, with Television a propaganda tool for the Capitol" (Pavlik 31), the tour is supposed to perpetuate Snow's dominant narrative. On their "Victory Tour," Katniss cannot help but to be herself, and she throws away the prompt cards given to her by the Capitol in order to perpetuate their narrative that the Games are an opportunity for Districts to thrive. Instead of reciting the Capitol's empty words of "thank you" to the Districts, Katniss tearfully thanks District 11 for Rue and Thresh, remembering them by name and refusing to let their songs go "unsung" (Collins *Catching Fire* 17). Though this touches Panem, Snow quickly mars it with grief when a Peacekeeper killed a man for throwing the District 12 "sign" in solidarity with Katniss for this act. Given Panem's strong reactions, it is Katniss' humanity that led her to the Games, helped her win the Games,

and sparked a revolution. Strangely, Katniss' locus of power as a rebel is in the very spectacle that is supposed to take away her agency through objectifying her. Through focusing on how one celebrity figure, Katniss the Mockingjay, was able to defeat two powerhouses like Presidents Snow and Coin, who had the actual State Apparatuses because they are Althusser's "the State" (Althusser 92), this text has the ability to give us a better understanding as to how spectacle can paradoxically give celebrities power to revolutionize an entire socioeconomic system based on spectacle in Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*.

I am not the first to apply Debord's *Society of Spectacle* to Collins' *Hunger Games* trilogy, Iranian students Samira Sasani and Marjan Darayee at Shiraz University have published a short paper "Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* and the Society of the Spectacle." However, their main point is to simply "prove that the city of Panem, with its governor President Snow, well represents the society of spectacle" (Abstract). My own work means to apply Debord's theories to the trilogy, but this is where our similarities end because this project seeks to understand how spectacle can unravel itself whenever a celebrity is willing to perform Debord's critical truths, also, I am using Althusser to understand the way this spectacle society operates. Due to its themes of feminism, rebellion, and class conflict, there is a wealth of scholarly research on the *Hunger Games* trilogy that concerns a wide variety of topics, and the idea of District Tributes being controlled by the media is hardly new. Seeking an understanding as to how the trilogy might spur young readers to perform its framework of revolution, Tompkins ultimately argues, that consumers are ultimately positioned to engage *Hunger Game's* fantasy of class revolution ironically, in the process of seeing through it (73). According to Tompson, the *Hunger Games* trilogy presents readers with a world where the binaries of good and evil are applied to

class, the Districts and the Capitol, respectively, which is how Katniss invokes empathy for the rebellion from readers *and* Panem spectators.

Another aspect of the series that scholars try to understand is how the media works within the *Hunger Games* trilogy. As Vivienne Muller puts it, in her article, “Virtually Real: Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games Trilogy*,” the “*Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins deals with a dystopian future society in which a punitive ruling elite provide ‘entertainment’ for the masses in the form of mediatised ‘games’” (51). She also bases her analysis on the media around the hunger games and how everyone, including Katniss is dehumanized by these games in the media. In a 2012 collection of essays by Phare and Clark, *Of Bread and Blood and The Hunger Games: Critical Essays on the Suzanne Collins Trilogy*, the entirety of its third chapter is devoted to essays under the theme of “Resistance, Surveillance, and Simulacra.” This chapter focuses on three essays, which discuss Katniss’ power as tribute and rebellious figure through the power of spectacle. Using Baudrillard’s theory of *Simulacra and Simulations* along with Althusian theory of ideology, Helen Day identifies the annual Hunger Games as a “repressive Ideological State Apparatus” (167) because it is compulsory to watch. Day also says that the “tesserae,” where children can put their name in the drawing for the “Reaping,” thus increasing their odds of being drawn to participate in the annual Hunger Games, in exchange for extra food and supplies for their families, causing tension between the well off and the poorest in each district (173). Ultimately, Day argues that the locus of Katniss’ power is her ability to simulate the unreal in the face of the repressive ideological apparatus of the drama-reality TV of the Hunger Games. Basically, Katniss understands how to play the larger Hunger Games better than Snow. Most other scholars also identify Katniss’ locus of power as performativity.

Similarly, Shannon R. Mortimore-Smith argues in “Fueling the Spectacle: Audience as Game maker” that the Games are ultimately an exercise in Neal Gabler’s “voyeurism” and the audience’s “Thrill of subversiveness” (161). Mortimore-Smith argues that in the end, “Collins’s dystopia forecasts the brutal outcome of any society that loses sight of the ‘reality’ that drives its entertainment” (164). Katniss’ agency is limited by her audience, who she argues act as the real “Game makers” of the series, as, “Only achieving the ‘gaze’ of her sponsors—by evoking empathy and the bloodlust of her spectators—can Katniss truly triumph” (158) Survival in the Hunger Games then depends more on Tributes’ abilities to evoke emotion from the audience.

Some scholars, like Tina Hanlon, link the events and culture in District 12 to the history of Appalachia in “Coal Dust and Ballads.” She then uses this framework to explain Katniss’ identity as a District 12 Tribute and as a rebel in relation to the cultural history of Appalachia, which is “communal” and “familial” as it is based around the home and coming home. Though Hanlon does not invoke the words “ideology” or “Althusser,” she alludes to it; Katniss’ “District 12 origins makes her unable to condemn others to death in the way that President Snow does” (62). In Hanlon’s eyes, Katniss has done nothing but long for home, which is why she returns to District 12, to regain her strength.

An aspect that scholarship has trouble answering, or is unable to answer—leaving this important part of the trilogy unanalyzed—is the rather bizarre and anti-climactic ending Katniss receives when she is stripped of the Mockingjay status and is sent back to District 12. Hanlon simply explains it as Katniss finally going home to the place that symbolizes her life and family, her strength. Tompkins, oddly, glosses over the ending entirely, but Day explains the end as the real coming down on Panem and Katniss herself, who must decide one day to “acknowledge

the real of her past to her children" (177). For Day, Katniss' work will never be done because she will always be working to prevent the next Snow/Coin. Mortimore-Smith is somewhat close to my own interpretation as she explains that Katniss realizes the importance of "practicing critical reflection and contentious pause" (165) like Thoreau in *Walden*, but she goes no further than the first book. This lack of scholarship leaves us asking the questions: what happens to society when the spectacle dies? What happens to the spectacular rebellion once a democratic council is set up? Is Katniss being stripped of the Mockingjay status a punishment or reward? The answers to these questions depend on how deeply Katniss was entrenched in spectacle to stop the Hunger Games, and how much Snow, Coin, and the rebellion influenced her perception of the world.

Before moving forward with this project, Althusser and Debord must be put into conversation because Snow's power is linked to his control over and continuation of Debord's spectacle, and a lot of this control relies on a complex system of ISAs and RSAs that he built into Panem to perpetuate his dominant narrative over the Games. In his theoretical work, *Lenin and Other Philosophies*, Louis Althusser laid out two different methods in which to trace ideology in his chapter "Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses." Althusser's argument is that ideology is traced through repression State Apparatuses (SA's) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA's), because they both communicate to subjects through delivering ideology (97). The main differences between these two is that SA's are primarily used by the State to violently convey its hegemonic ideology, typically to the economic base in order to keep them under their laws and culture (97), even if their cultures are vastly different. One of the most important lines from his work is, "All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (117),



we cannot exist outside of ideology. According to Culler, one of the most important concepts Althusser helped define for Marxism is the concept of “interpellation”; “the subject is *an effect* constituted in the processes of the unconscious, or discourse, and of the relatively autonomous practices that organize society<sup>2</sup>” (143). Through the concept of “Interpellation,” Althusser understands that ISAs and RSAs exist to convey a person’s place in the dominant ideology, and to keep them there, thereby, ensuring the survival of the current system.

Guy Debord, who wrote *The Society of the Spectacle*, does not touch on spectacle and ideology until the end of his book. According to him, “spectacle,” is the “epitome of ideology because in its plenitude it exposes and manifests the essence of all ideological systems” (Debord 115). Just as Althusser’s “interpellation” helped people understand their rolls and places in the dominant system, this “mediation by images” does the same since the spectacle is now representative of the socioeconomic functions of society. Debord’s spectacle in *The Society of the Spectacle* is a paradox that at once becomes ideology itself, while also perpetuating the dominant ideology that birthed it to begin with. It then proceeds to degrade all of life in the sense of “the impoverishment, enslavement, and negation of real life” that Debord believes all ideological systems do anyways (Debord 115). When Debord spends 221 Theses explaining spectacle’s power of deception, he is explaining how dominant ideology creates the spectacle to perpetuate itself through reproducing its signs in spectacle; “The language of the spectacle consists of signs of the dominant system of production-signs which are at the same time the ultimate end-products of that system” (Debord 3). As spectacle becomes autonomous and

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<sup>2</sup> Note that Culler is referring to RSAs and ISAs.

begins to take over society, it begins to take center stage, and, just as the educational ISAs and religious ISAs of older times, it causes society, reality, and even our sense of time to re-organize itself around the new economy and its necessities. Though Debord distinguishes the ideology of the spectacle as different from that of the dominant ideology (Debord 114), Althusser's RSAs and ISAs would work to perpetuate both since they are essential to understanding one's place in dominant society, and by extension, the spectacle.

Collins' *Hunger Games* trilogy is particularly useful for a reading of the theories laid out in the previous paragraphs. Collins' Panem is literally Debord's society of the spectacle since the economy revolves around the Annual Hunger Games. As the trilogy unfolds, we begin to understand that almost every aspect of society and life in Panem is devoted keeping up the spectacle that is the Annual Hunger Games. The RSAs, the "Peacekeepers," the police in Panem who patrol the Districts *and* the Capitol, are a central part to the continuation of the Games. Though they are not supposed to be part of the spectacle, their job is to make sure that *all* eligible District children are present for the "reaping," thus, providing "Tributes" (sacrifices). The Peacekeepers are also responsible for crowd control, as Katniss and Peeta are being filmed, saying their goodbyes, the Peacekeepers keep the good-byes short and to the point (Collins *Hunger Games* 37). The Peacekeepers are imperative for keeping up the façade that District tributes are happy and proud to serve their country in a sense, by going to their deaths as a yearly reminder to the Districts about their failed rebellion. Though Katniss, and presumably, other District members like her, see through the false patriotic unity of the Hunger Games, this is not important for the continuation of the Hunger Games. "The spectacle is the ruling order's nonstop discourse about itself, its never-ending monologue of self-praise, its self-portrait at the

stage of totalitarian domination of all aspects of life” (Debord 7). As implied by the introduction of the first book, the Games are nothing more than a yearly reminder to the Districts that they lost to the Capitol, and now, Districts are practically slaves. However, the Games *represent* the ruling order’s discourse about itself—they won the war, and the Hunger Games is a way to keep winning this war every year—but it still remains autonomous because it is a self-perpetuating commodity that has taken on a life of its own once the society has been brainwashed and hypnotized. Who is to say that the ruling class that controls the spectacle cannot fall prey to it? This is Collins’s point with rich Capitol “sponsors” for the Hunger Games, as well as Debord’s when he discusses how it degrades life.

In Thesis 14, Debord states, “In the spectacle—the visual reflection of the ruling economic order—goals are nothing, development is everything. The spectacle aims at nothing other than itself” (Debord 5). When Debord said that society is mediated through images (Debord 2), he meant that the spectacle creates distance through replacing experience with images that represent the real. Thus, creating alienation between classes through an immersive entertainment. The only point of the annual Hunger Games is to distract an unthinking bourgeoisie, who have the power to overthrow President Snow if they wanted to, and to further psychologically oppress Districts. All while making a show of bipartisanship in Panem. Capitol citizens may not be performing since their part in the spectacle is to exclusively be “spectators,” but unbeknownst to them, the State and the District Tributes are always performing. Obscuring the horrors of the Hunger Games with smiles and false promises that they are happy to die for the Capitol, the Games thus re-make reality.

The spectacle presents itself as a vast inaccessible reality that can never be questioned. Its sole message is: “What appears is good, and what is good appears.” The passive

acceptance it demands is already effectively imposed by its monopoly of appearances, its manner of appearing without allowing any reply. (Debord 4)

At this point, President Snow has had 74 years to perfect the Annual Hunger Games for psychological terror on the districts, and to brainwash his populace into a mindless acceptance of anything that is presented on screen because this is the only way that communication actually occurs in the trilogy. This creates the alienation between people and life as well as between people since life is now “mediated by images” (Debord 2); “The spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images” (Debord 2). Authority only communicates through spectacle, which primes this passive populace into accepting whatever spectacle is in front of them as good and true. Afterall, what appears is unquestionably good, so long as it is in spectacle, and the converse for proletariat is also true; in totalitarian ideology, just as in bourgeoisie ideology, “nothing exists except what it says exists” (Debord 52). Any time President Snow makes an announcement, there is pomp and circumstance to convey his authority as the supreme authority and the “good” authority; we always see him on screen, speaking calmly and dressed as if he is the father of Panem, a father who expresses sadness that there was a civil war, and justifies the annual Hunger Games as necessary to maintain this delicate order that all of Panem has fought to achieve—this is false, but due to the authority that the Hunger Games grants to Snow, he can make it true, and thus, make it exist, which he does.

In Collins’s dystopic narrative, we see how the Annual Hunger Games serves to disseminate President Snow’s ideology, and to keep it dominant through being an ISA; however, this yearly spectacle also falls into Debord’s category of ideology itself, and this is the point, “The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as

a *means of unification*” (Debord 2). The locus of power for spectacle is the fact that its essence, it’s very state of existing, or the quality that determines its character, has become so abstract and has entered such a fluid state of existence that its meaning, and its place, has been lost. Occupying a multitude of spaces, invading private lives, and holding a unique place in society as it keeps President Snow in power, while simultaneously keeping the economy of Panem stable by feeding spectators. This spectacle is an ISA because it delivers ideology to the masses through material means.

Understanding how Panem functions around the Hunger Games, and how President Snow’s power is connected to the spectacle, Snow’s ideology stays dominant because it has engrained itself within the Hunger Games, which is a spectacle that has taken on a life of its own. As Debord predicted, the spectacle is good at maintaining itself, and it is when Snow and Coin try to take over the spectacle and turn it into something that has a means to an end for their agendas does their power over the spectacle begin to wane. They fail to realize that the spectacle is more powerful than themselves and even they are beholden to the continuation of the Games. The Districts are able to see through the spectacle because they already understand themselves as being exploited. How is Snow able to stay in power if the Districts understand themselves as exploited and Capitol citizens have no political power? The answer to this is a complex interaction between Althusser’s ISAs, RSAs, and interpellation, and Debord’s spectacle, which is answered in the first chapter of this work.

Chapter 1 examines how President Snow has his own part to play in the start of the rebellion. As Althusser’s the State, he has the power to implement RSAs, having come directly from the state, and to influence the functions and existences of the ISAs, and he has rigged all

of the ISAs in Panem to keep the illusion that Debord's spectacle is reality, rather than just a mere flat, representation. From education to every last detail of media displays, Snow has designed Panem to ideologically accept whatever dominates the Mass Media ISA because they all enforce the ideology of the Hunger Games. Caesar Flickerman is more of an ISA than a celebrity in this case because the purpose of his existence is to keep the excitement for the Hunger Games positive and to appropriate, thus culturally neutralizing, any dissenting thought. Flickerman's direct ties to the Hunger Games are revealed as the trilogy goes on, he is the first to welcome Katniss and Peeta as the newest "victors," granting them the power of celebrity in Panem. He is hardly alone though, Cinna, Katniss' "stylist" gave her a language through which to communicate and ingratiate herself with the rest of Panem. With Katniss' true critique of the Hunger Games being just enough to wake Districts 12-3 up and spark a revolt.

Building on Chapter 1, in Chapter 2, Snow sells the Hunger Games to the passive masses of the Capitol through the implied promise that they do not have to be subject to its violence, and that they are in fact, good for participating. The Districts are difficult for Snow to sell the Games to, but he is able to do so nonetheless through a complex combination of RSA and ideological conditioning, celebrity endorsement, and appropriation of the reluctant symbol of rebellion: the Mockingjay, or Katniss/"the Girl on Fire." In order to stop the revolt, Snow must re-interpellated Katniss as the Capitol's Rebel, thus, commodifying Katniss' rebel image into something that can be a neutralized threat, or making the "Girl on Fire" part of the Capitol's image. The point of this is to say that the Capitol is fair enough to allow *some* dissent, but this dissent must go no further than fashion and surface level appearances. However, since Katniss' rebel image has become larger than herself, and therefore, its meaning, and because she

cannot help but to disrupt Snow's society of the spectacle through Debord's true critique, his power is even further unraveled. Coin attempts to do the same, but as Debord stated, the spectacle is autonomous, and its end is itself. In a strange way, this grants Katniss an agency that she would not otherwise have because as the Mockingjay, she cannot be owned, and thus, she is able to kill the next dictator of spectacle: President Coin.

Chapter 1 is about how Snow must keep up the façade of the Hunger Games in order to stay in power, Chapter 2 expounds of the ideas laid out in Chapter 1 about how Snow conditions Panem for rebellion through spectacle. Chapter 2 discusses how Katniss must fight spectacle with spectacle in order to bring the false reality just beneath the spectacle to the surface. To do so, she commodifies herself into her celebrity image, not just through wardrobe, but also through the power of personality. Just as Snow needed Katniss to subtly endorse the hunger games, Katniss must endorse the rebellion as a better alternative, and by extension, bizarrely endorse reality through spectacle. The conclusion of this work ties everything together to move towards an understanding of the true meaning behind Katniss' ending in the context of Debord's spectacle.

## CHAPTER 1

### PRESIDENT SNOW'S ROLE IN THE REBELLION

When referring to “spectacle” Debord is referring to mass media, and *The Society of Spectacle* is a book of 221 theses about how spectacle has replaced authentic, real social relationships among people in a society. Debord opens his book with, “In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation” (Debord 1). Debord suggests that we are alienated from our work and ourselves as humans since the age of advertising and television because of the way spectacle degrades life. Spectacle and the products it advertises are no longer a collection of images that gain worth and value through social relationships, rather, they have become a social relation *itself* through which we understand each other (Debord 2). Ultimately, Debord’s theory of the “Degradation of Life” describes the ways in which spectacle has completely colonized our personal and social lives, which leads to a reduced understanding of ourselves, alienation from who we are, and alienation from the very essence of what it means to be human. Though Collins demonstrates how the spectacle alienates deteriorates life for all in Panem, the Careers are particularly alienated because of their place in the society of spectacle: specialists of the spectacle. Cato, the Tribute from District 2, is a prime example of how the Careers are the most alienated. Understanding how the spectacle brainwashes the populace into Snow’s narrative requires the use of Althusser and his theories on ISAs and interpellation, President Snow is the state in Panem and it shows through his installation of various mouthpieces like Caesar Flickerman, who provides the narration of Snow’s spectacle –Flickerman’s job in the media ISA is to make



spectacle believable and acceptable to the masses through interpellating citizens into their proper roles so that spectacle may go on. However, just as Flickerman uses Debord's celebrity to grant himself credence in this society, celebrity grants Victors like Katniss the same influence. After Flickerman interpellates her into the Games, Katniss uses Debord's celebrity to perform the exact opposite of what she is supposed to do: she uses her new status to communicate "critical truths" to Panem, which restores linear, historical time that the Districts can agitate on, destroying Snow's power, cyclical time of the Hunger Games, and by extension, the false consciousness that the Games create. In addition, using Althusser's theory on ideology sheds light on how Snow is able to perpetuate his narrative for the Games, keeping the Districts disunified from the individual level to the community level.

Some scholarship that discusses class inequality in Panem argues that the Annual Hunger Games contain a cultural narrative about the Capitol and Districts that tell them what to think of themselves. Gretchen Koenig writes that "Collins engages the notion that victors write the script of their own history as she uses Katniss to question who holds the pen that creates, shapes, and defines cultural memory" (39) as the power of the Capitol lies on "observation fueled by violence" (39). This narrative about the meaning of the Annual Hunger games is meant to keep up a false consciousness of class and identity. Complicating this notion of narratives is that the Annual Hunger Games is "both a symbol of an ideology of oppression and a means of controlling the populace through stylized violence" (Pavlik 30), the Hunger Games is a tool used to perpetuate Snow's narrative of Panem. While this work touches on this notion of narratives as keeping the classes under control through alienation and false consciousness, I argue that this is only one facet of Snow's class control because Debord's disunity and cyclical

time also come out of these cultural narratives through the ISA of the media. Therefore, using Althusser's ideology and ISAs with Debord to help explain this degradation of life in Panem leads to a better understanding as to how the Hunger Games perpetuates Snow's power; additionally, it also displays how Snow's dominance perpetuates the spectacle through the structure of society and the economy. The survival of the state and the survival of the spectacle are directly linked and depend on each other at the expense of lives in the Districts, and the way that Panem is structured ensures this. In 2011, Tom Henthorne penned *Approaching the Hunger Games Trilogy: A Literary and Cultural Analysis*, which devotes its fifth chapter to a Marxist approach to class conflict. For Henthorne, the Games' broadcast programming is the locus of class conflict because the rich in the Capitol can afford to help their favorite "Tribute" win. Henthorne compares this to how the audience would control the contestants on contemporary game shows such as *Survivor*, *Extreme Makeover*, and *Project Runway* and how those shows also dehumanize their own "Tributes" (97). He bases his Althusian analysis on the *Hunger Games* trilogy around the Games themselves. In "Absolute Power Games," Anthony Pavlik positions the *Hunger Games* trilogy as anti-fascist. He argues that the "Hunger Games were instituted as an annual reminder that rebellion against the Capitol should never happen again be considered" (31). According to him, the Games are the ultimate form of this "terror tactic" (31) that is designed to keep the Districts divided in order for President Snow to remain the conqueror. Pavlik hints that Snow's righteousness makes it even harder to revolt against his ideology as "Ur Fascism seeks to win popular support through the appeal 'against intruders' (81), taking advantage of people's natural fear of the Other" (32). In the end, the Hunger Games subverts its own message of peace and equality "by offering no logical or practical way to

remove oppressive regimes from power other than through militaristic means” (37). Koenig argues that the Capitol is telling the Districts what to think through these narratives and this is how they are controlled. She uses Foucault to understand that historical memory is powerful enough that the children of Panem “become a living embodiment of historical evil; they become a living metaphor of the past” (41). Therefore, if Katniss is to be a successful Mockingjay, it is her job to discover the real historical truth behind Presidents Snow’s and Coin’s power (46-47).

Before Katniss restores Koenig’s historical truth, we must understand how District Tributes are alienated from each other and themselves due to the ideological message behind the spectacle of the Annual Hunger Games. Katniss holds to District ideology as she sees through the Hunger Games as nothing more than a way to keep punishing the Districts for a war that happened almost a century ago; “To make it humiliating as well as torturous, the Capitol requires us to treat the Hunger Games as a festivity, a sporting event pitting every district against the others” (Collins *Hunger Games* 19). Being born under District ideology, which understands that Districts are being exploited by the dominant class in the Capitol, Katniss understands the Games are a fear tactic used by the Capitol (Pavlik 31). Through Katniss and the *Hunger Games* trilogy, readers understand that President Snow’s requirement to watch the Games is a tool to condition the Districts into obedience, while also manufacturing a competition, and thus, animosity, between Districts as there can only be one winner. According to Kula, the Games further divide the Districts because “they erase equality, unity and possibility of cooperation, both between the districts and within them” (Kula 56). Forcing the Districts to watch the Annual Hunger Games each year will indoctrinate some into the narrative

that the Hunger Games are good for all of Panem, and an opportunity for Districts to repent and receive glory from the Capitol. As Katniss discusses how “some former Tributes won, some are triumphant, pumping their fists in the air, beating their chests” (Collins *Hunger Games* 362), readers see how Snow subtly conditions the districts to associate the Games with celebration. Through showing these images, President Snow conditions the citizens into his narrative, which “reinforce[s] the foundational myth that the institution known as the Hunger Games preserves” (Pavlik 31). As this narrative informs the spectacle, Collins shows us how Snow’s narrative achieves its desired results for some Districts, partial results for others, and no results for the rest. Since there is no reply to the spectacle (Debord 4) of the Hunger Games, it degrades life in the sense that Districts will either fall in line, accept the narrative that Snow has given to the spectacle and prepare to compete, or they will not. Districts 1 and 2 are far more well off than the others because they fall in line with the Capitol’s narrative by brainwashing their own children into believing the false promises of the spectacle through training them at a young age to compete. However, being specialists in the spectacle led them to become the most alienated from humanity and the essence of life.

Districts 1 and 2 are shown to be the most brainwashed into Snow’s narrative that the Annual Hunger Games will bring them honor and glory, and they are also the only Tributes who truly compete in the manner that the spectacle demands. Unable to see the other Tributes as human, Cato, Clove, Glimmer, and Marvel, are the cruelest competitors, and the most prideful of their abilities to kill other children. Jealous that Katniss scored higher than them, these “Career” Tributes come after her first (Collins *Hunger Games* 128). Katniss’ score is perceived as a direct insult to the Careers who have spent their whole lives training for the Hunger Games,

but more importantly, it is an insult towards their sheer existence as her amateur score outperforms their own. As many scholars, like Skinner and McCord (110) and Vivienne Muller (51), have noticed, Collins bases the world building and mythology of Panem on Greco-Roman history (Muller 54), and the strong parallels between Greco-Roman history and Panem's mythology/world building leads some scholars to apply figures from Greek or Roman history to some of the characters in the *Hunger Games* trilogy to further readers' understanding of character motivations. Scholar Valerie Frankel compares Collins' Cato to the historical figure, "Cato the Younger," to explain the young man's passion for violence; "His family had a long history of military service, making Cato a type of Career Tribute, hoping to advance through amazing triumphs in battle" (32). Though this extrapolation about Cato is not canon by Collins, Frankel's creative analysis is plausible because Cato's District is where the Capitol's Peacekeepers are trained and recruited (Collins *Mockingjay* 64), the analysis is also in line with Cato's characterization from Katniss' narrative perspective.

Through the character of Cato, readers understand the extent of Career Tributes' alienation from life, and also, how the Annual Hunger Games deteriorate their lives. Readers only understand Cato through his performance as a Tribute, his all-consuming desire for personal glory and to bring pride to his District indicates, and this is Collins' point; Career Tributes are only able to attach self-worth to their performance in the Games because this is all they have been taught. Cato and Clove live to compete in the Annual Hunger Games, and as Ross shows in his cinematic rendition, their costumes worn during the spectacle outside of the arena are reminiscent of Roman gladiators (*Hunger Games* Ross 2012). In the arena, Cato keeps up this gladiator persona from the pre-games as he uses a sword to commit spectacular

violence. Though Glimmer offers Cato a bow to shoot Katniss down from the trees, Cato rejects them and claims, “I’ll do better with my sword” (Collins *Hunger Games* 182). This detail about Cato’s sword preference indicates how his training for the Games as a Career has shaped and defined him—Cato does not just live for the Games, the spectacle gives him purpose to exist through performance.

Cato’s preference for his sword over the arrows has two effects: one, and the most important, using the gladiator sword will help him keep sponsors, he is *always* performing; two, Katniss’ training score of “eleven” was an insult to this persona, who only scored a “ten” (Collins *Hunger games* 108), so using a sword to eliminate her keeps in line with this persona. However, these performative personas fall apart once Career Tributes are faced with death, such as Clove’s. As she dies, all bravado disappears and she screams for Cato to save her (Collins *Hunger Games* 287). In this moment of Clove’s death, Collins reveals to readers that Clove’s previous fearlessness and ruthlessness—traits which make her an ideal Tribute—are false, now, her true nature is revealed, she is no more than a fifteen-year-old *child* who was coerced by Snow’s system to discard her humanity at birth. Despite his cruelty, Katniss does not have the heart to kill Cato in cold blood as he suffers from a mauling by the “mutts,” instead, “Pity, not vengeance, sends [her] arrow flying into his skull” (Collins *Hunger Games* 341). Cato’s death gives Katniss no relief that she is no longer subjected to his violence, she only feels grief and emptiness. “‘Then we won, Katniss,’ [Peeta] says hollowly. ‘Hurray for us,’ I get out, but there’s no joy of victory in my voice” (Collins *Hunger Games* 341). Their victory is hollow because there *is no victory* when one is a “Victor,” these Victors are only survivors, President Snow is the *only* true victor because the Annual Hunger Games are about him, not the Victors

or Tributes. After all, the Games are just a violent show and display of power.

The films give us a far more poignant and horrifying ending that drives home the idea that the Careers are almost completely alienated from the very essence of humanity:

Go on, shoot. And we both go down, and you win. Go on. I'm dead, anyway! I always was, right? I didn't know that until now. Isn't that what they want, huh? No! I can still do this. I can still do this. One more kill. It's the only thing I know how to do. Bring pride to my district. Not that it matters. (*Hunger Games* Ross 2012)

Cato's speech is the saddest in the films because it reveals the terrible truth of his life: he did not have one because living for the false promises of the Annual Hunger Games robbed him of one. Watching the Games all of his life and being trained to be a Victor, Cato fell prey to the spectacle's promise that if he wins and spent his life working towards this victory, then he will obtain glory for himself and his District. Cato's obsessive training for the Games made him better for Snow and the illusion of the Hunger Games, but it cost him everything, including his humanity. In Debord's thesis 14, he claims, "The society based on modern industry is not accidentally or superficially spectacular, it is *fundamentally spectaclist*" (5). Here, Debord discusses how the society of spectacle is "fundamentally spectaclist" in the sense that "industry," or, the economic system, now revolves around spectacle to the point that everyone specializes in keeping the spectacle as the dominant economic system with their job placement and careers. Since the spectacle is only a means to an end in itself, there is no real goal, "goals are nothing, development is everything" (Debord 5). Applying this concept to the *Hunger Games*, Districts 1 and 2 only serve to keep the Games going, providing children who specialize in spectacular violence, but who have no other point for existing. This is another degradation of life that Debord was getting at in this thesis, everyone in this society who tries to fit in with the demands of the spectacle will live hollow, non-existent lives for the benefit of those in power.

The Annual Hunger Games and Snow's narrative provide Cato and the other Careers with false promises that being a "Victor" would bring pride and happiness, and thus, complete their lives. After the death of his female counterpart, Clove, Cato despairs and begins to seek personal revenge on Thresh and Katniss (Collins *Hunger Games* 289). Clove's death is significant because it is the only death that disturbs Cato to his core as she was the closet person he had to a friend, the only person that the Games did not alienate him from. Cato's final words then indicate that he wants Katniss to kill him because being in the Games caused the curtain to come up and reveal its true nature to him; even if he wins, Cato will become like Haymitch, a shadow of himself, because he is alone and his whole "life" led up to an event that means absolutely *nothing*. The Games are only a means to an end themselves, and President Snow is the only person who benefits because he has designed Panem to link his power with the Games.

Cato and the other Careers are hardly alone in being alienated in this manner, Katniss is not immune to the alienation from life and the self that the Hunger Games tends to provoke as she too only saw the other Tributes as "competition" and not "human" (Muller 59). In her own work that examines how President Snow's ideological narrative encourages violence and the dehumanization of other people, using Althusser, Vivienne Muller assesses that Katniss has also fallen prey to the ideological narrative as she too interpellated past District sacrifices as "Tributes" and "players" (55); Muller compares Katniss' dispassion as a spectator as "more like an allusion to a failed, poor quality television drama than to what they really are – a slaughter" (55). Though Katniss knows some of the children who are killed in past Annual Hunger Games, the spectacle is somehow able to interpellate her in as well, but only when she is spectating



because she is being interpellated into the spectacle through passive participation. Though Althusser does not narrow his focus on the media like Debord as he theorizes how “ideological state apparatuses” (ISAs) and “State Apparatuses” (SAs) work to interpellate people in a society to a specific role, which conditions them to behave towards others in accordance with their rolls in society. According to Althusser, interpellation is how we know our identities in a specific group or ideology; it is our induction into Lacan’s symbolic order of “objectifying language” (Althusser 143) that tells us our rolls in a societal ideology through a constant dialogue between the individual and society at large (Althusser 118), this is how the small child knows “itself as a *human* child” in a world of adults (Althusser 143). Applying Althusser’s interpellation to Collins’ *Hunger Games* trilogy, the term “Tribute” is sinister and distinctly meant to help Districts dehumanize each other through discord, which decreases their chances of successful rebellion. As Muller remarks “The nomenclature ‘tributes,’ a term connoting sacrifice, support and honour for self and country, silences what they are – children and forced combatants in a dictator’s political strategy of control” (55). Applying Althusser’s concept of “interpellation” and Muller’s analyses, these terms that are used for those who compete in the Annual Hunger Games—“Tribute,” “Victor,” “Mentor”—are not only dehumanizing, but they are also meant to make participants feel like tools to be used once a year to forever repeat the vicious cycle of the Games.

Whereas Muller argues that the “dominance of the virtual” is inductive towards interpersonal violence and inhumanity because it blurs the lines between the virtual and real, which hampers “moral distinctions about the truth or significance of what we see” (61), I argue that Katniss cannot help but to be interpellated into Snow’s spectacle because conditioning the

populace out of humanity is part of its destruction of authentic life. Katniss, as Debord's theory suggests, is initially drugged by the ideology pushed by President Snow and Flickerman through the Games, she has dehumanized the children into "Tributes"—an interpellation in his ideology that these District children are to be seen as nothing more than pieces of a game for his Gamemaker to manipulate for the joy and excitement of the Capitol citizens in order to keep them complacent. This is in part because spectacle is ideology made material:

the *materialization* of ideology brought about by the concrete success of an automatized system of economic production—which virtually identifies social reality with an ideology that has remolded all reality in its own image. (Debord 114).

The Annual Hunger Games is ideology made material in the hollow sense, it only seeks to keep replicating itself, and it does so through more spectacle. Until now, I have only discussed how the proletariat Districts and the petite bourgeoisie Districts fall victim to spectacle, but spectacle degrades the lives of those in the dominant ideology/class. Though spectacle is supposed to keep the dominant classes in power through the signs of the spectacle (Debord 3), they too become victims to spectacle as they are now unthinking slaves to it. Readers see this in the *Hunger Games* trilogy through Effie's unintentional callousness towards the Districts that she is supposed to be caring for, she cannot see beyond the spectacular trappings of the Games. In addition, the other Capitol citizens, like Katniss' cosmetic team, care nothing about the Games beyond the fashion and winning bets. The cosmetic team barely acknowledges Katniss' existence as a person, and Katniss even remarks on *their* lack of humanity, "I should be embarrassed, but they're so unlike people that I'm no more self-conscious than if a trio of oddly colored birds were pecking around my feet" (Collins *Hunger Games* 62). Class divisions are so distinct and alienating that Katniss *and* the cosmetic team dehumanize each other without

Snow's help. Katniss is merely a game piece that the team must make beautiful by their Capitol standards so that sponsors can identify with her. The dominant class in Panem, like Debord's society, is the only class that may actually enjoy the very product—the spectacle—that it creates. Even then, the enjoyment degrades life for the already superficial Capitol citizens, though they do not realize it.

In the world of Panem, Snow has a monopoly over the mass media ISA through being president, which allows him to install people in this ISA who will give credence to his ideology communicated through spectacle. In order to feed spectacle—and by extension, Snow's power—the dominant classes enlist some people, who are placed on a pedestal in spectacle, to legitimize the spectacle through themselves, they are called "celebrities" (Debord 24). A celebrity's function is to act out these abstract meanings that spectacle communicates through images—such as the glory that Cato sought—and make them appear to be something tangible and real. However, in order for this aspect of spectacle brainwashing to work, celebrities must endorse spectacle through the presentation of their lifestyles, which must be done through the illusion that they are living life in a "*full, totally free manner*" (Debord 24). Debord's theories on celebrities is important to the *Hunger Games* trilogy when applied to the character Caesar Flickerman, the main person who grants credence to the spectacle through narrating how citizens should digest the scenes in front of them, which also interpellates the participants of spectacle. When Katniss and Peeta emerge from the Games, they are "survivors," only after Caesar Flickerman interviews them do they become "Victors."

Initially a voice of sense and calm to Katniss and Peeta as Tributes, Caesar Flickerman's more sinister nature is revealed upon their victory, images of the Annual Hunger Games flash

across the screens, as Katniss and Peeta look on in horror. Katniss and Peeta feel like they “survived,” but Flickerman’s show after the Games makes them “Victors” (Collins *Hunger Games* 362) with all of the pomp and circumstance. The implication of Flickerman’s victory show is that Peeta and Katniss are now reaping the benefits of their new celebrity status when they go home, and Flickerman’s implied question here is; “the Hunger Games that you hate has given you and your family everything you could ever dream of, how is this not a great thing?” A Victor’s sheer survival and subsequent life afterwards—a bizarre twist of the classic rags to riches narrative—is an endorsement of the spectacle from a proletariat turned petite bourgeoisie. After the Games, when the District Victors win, they are separated out from the rest of their District—their home—which further causes disunity, and more insidiously, the media only shows “Victor’s Villiage” whenever Katniss and Peeta win (Collins *Hunger Games* 375). The media never shows the true suffering of the Districts, and the Victors are never asked about their lives before the Games, nor are their relatives shown. The Games are not just for the bourgeoisie to enjoy, they are also a way to subtly condition the Victors to identify more with the Capitol as petite bourgeoisie, instead of the Districts from which they came. While Katniss and Peeta do not quite feel alienated from their old friends, yet, Haymitch has been treated like a fool and pariah by District 12 for years. Haymitch Abernathy, whose self-medicating alcoholism causes him to publicly act foolish, is treated poorly and ridiculed by his own people at the Reaping, interestingly, the citizens in the Capitol respect him. Even Effie, who knows that Haymitch consumes alcohol inappropriately, often looks past this habit and admires Haymitch for his experience in the Games and his wisdom (Collins *Hunger Games* 46). Effie’s and the other Capitol citizens’ non-reaction tells readers that when Victors fall prey to mental

health problems due to winning the Games, they are still endorsing the Games, and by extension, the Capitol lifestyle of excess because they are alive. Haymitch and other Victors live as Debord's celebrities, like Flickerman, a life that is *seemingly* autonomous and free because they have won the Annual Hunger Games. If they die from overdose, the Capitol will spin the death as better than starving in the Districts. Even in death, the Victors cannot escape the Games, and the ones left alive are doomed to be caught in cyclical, irreversible time. The spectacle of the Games demands to be repeated year after year, its replication barring the establishment of historical, linear time.

Katniss is incorrect when she said that she was leaving the Hunger Games arena because she will *never* leave the Hunger games (Collins *Hunger Games* 358). Katniss' Victory Tour with Peeta never ends because the Games never end. Nobody is free from the distortion of reality that the spectacle uses to perpetuate its economic system, even time is distorted by it. As the spectacle takes over society, our sense of time is no longer cyclical, or linear, rather, it becomes arrested. The spectacle brings out "the triumph of irreversible time" (Debord 78), and the spectacle is this "historical moment" (Debord 4) that we are caught in, and everything, including time and reality, becomes subjective. It presents itself as the only worldview—which is why the Hunger Games have "no reply"—it has "remodeled all reality in its own image" (Debord 114). Since this worldview is totalitarian in nature, and in order for Snow to stay in power, he needs the Hunger Games to continue. Victors are pressured to stay in this arrested development by the Capitol ideology that they own them, or more specifically, President Snow owns them. As the Games have colonized all aspects of life, once a Tribute becomes a Victor, their only identity in Panem is linked to the Games— Katniss will never be "Katniss Everdeen"

again, she will always be the “Girl on Fire.” Cementing her new status as a petite bourgeoisie, she becomes a “Mentor” to those who will come after her because the show must go on. The Games never end because their only purpose is to continue the spectacle, and President Snow will never let them end because they are the ultimate ideological delivery system to keeping the Districts under his control. Snow has every reason to panic after the first book when Katniss threatened suicide, as Henthorne so astutely pointed out, “the Capitol cannot tolerate any form of resistance, even suicide, if the Games are going to have the desired ideological effect: it must always exercise power in absolute terms” (99). Katniss is granted agency by the logic of the Games—she has won, and now, she gets to live in peace—but Snow limits this agency, ironically, by the very system that granted it in the first place: the Annual Hunger Games.

Being Panem’s main ISA in the *Hunger Games* trilogy, the spectacle of the Hunger Games is central to the economy and power of those who head it because it is responsible for the interpellation everyone into the society of Panem. Examining the Annual Hunger Games as an ISA, in agreement with Helen Day, I also argue that the Games are specifically a “repressional Ideological State Apparatus” (Day 167). As Day says in her analysis of the *Hunger Games* and *The Running Man*, “Like all ISAs, television functions not only by ideology, but also by violence” (168). In spectacle Panem and its Annual Hunger Games, the dominant ISA is no longer the educational ISA, but rather, the mass media ISA. Why is this significant? Althusser argues that society re-orders itself around its dominant ISA, which will colonize life and economic conditions to the point that it is the main factor responsible for interpellating everyone into their role (102). In Medieval times, societies depended on the Church for interpellation, but also, as the main mode of delivering societal norms and mores, which is one reason why the

church had more expansive and elevated place compared to today; in fact, the church once served the same purpose as our current dominant educational ISA (Althusser 103-104). As the dominant ISA, the Church penetrated many aspects of life in order to deliver its ideology and keep it dominant as it warped the other private ISAs to reproduce itself and maintain power. The same reasoning goes for the educational ISA, once it became dominant, the other ISAs have followed and re-framed their own subjective realities into conformity towards the educational (e.g. the family ISA stressing and disciplining children to conform to school standards; mass media ISA portrays “good” children as attending school, normalizing its domination over life itself) (Althusser 104). How does this apply to Panem when the dominant ISA is mass media? What does it mean for Debord’s spectacle?

According to Althusser, "what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number-one, i.e. as its dominant ideological State apparatus, is the educational apparatus, which has in fact replaced in its functions the previously dominant ideological State apparatus, the Church" (103-104). He explains how education interpellated children into their more permanent status as adults since each class stays involved in education according to where they are in society: "Each mass ejected en route is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role it has to fulfill in class society" (Althusser 105). This replicates dominant ideology, and also the current economic model, and other ISAs conform to the dominant ideology. Just as our current educational ISA does this for us in the United States, the mass media ISA does this for dystopic Panem. Interestingly, the media ISA also serves as an educational institution for the world of Panem than the educational ISA itself. Katniss remarks how school is about nothing but coal because they are the “coal mining district” (Collins *Hunger Games* 41), yet she learns the most about the

world through the media, specifically, she learns the most about her specific reality through watching the Hunger Games and how to survive them through the media ISA. The schools tell Katniss that she will work with coal, but the media tells her that she will fight for her life one day because she is a disposable District citizen like the other Tributes.

When Katniss discusses the implicit ideological message behind the constant bombardment of images from the Hunger Games, she places particular emphasis on the powerlessness of the Districts. This is not exactly true because Districts 1 and 2 are considered the “Career Districts,” meaning that they put their children through specific training programs to win the Games (Collins *Hunger Games* 94). This training involves everything from flashy and brutal combat training to etiquette training—Collins repeatedly shows us how they have the advantage of “knowing” how to act in front of a camera for maximum sponsors. Katniss only feels powerless because that is exactly how she is supposed to feel according to President Snow’s ideology passed through the Annual Hunger Games, which “reaches back into Panem’s collective memory and tells the Districts what to think of their own history” (Koenig 40).

Districts 1 and 2 have chosen to fall in line with Snow’s ideology because they are understood as allies to the Capitol, while the other Districts are unrepentant belligerents. As Hamre so astutely pointed out, “one way of keeping the districts from forming an alliance against the Capitol is to always keep them separated both the districts and the people within the districts” (27). There is a hierarchy within Panem itself, between the Districts, and in the Districts, creating competition on all three levels and keeping up disunity. Taking this notion of competition and disunity a step further, the Capitol favors Districts 1 and 2, and this has led to a feed-back effect where these districts win more favor. The favoritism allows their Districts more resources to be specialized in



the Games, and this leads to another victorious cycle. Time has become cyclical here as well, so we do not know what happened first, did Districts 1 and 2 keep winning, or were they favored and that is why they won? There is no evidence for either answer, thus, cyclical time has also obscured the history of Panem, preventing a District revolution because they need historical time as a platform of agitation; they need a known narrative of historical exploitation, and the Annual Hunger Games robs them of this. Instead, they are under Snow's narrative that all of their suffering is their own fault, and thus, now have a "false consciousness"<sup>3</sup> that makes them susceptible to spectacular manipulation.

Caesar Flickerman is central to the writing of Snow's narrative and producing the false-consciousness in Panem to keep the Annual Hunger Games cyclical. Flickerman's interview with Gamemaker Seneca Crane is meant to "re-right" the history of the Annual Hunger Games every year, or rather, his job is to "re-write" history into something palatable for the Capitol to accept. Mortimore-Smith claims, "It's not about what's real: it's about the fabrication of reality that really matters" (160). Ultimately, Flickerman's job legitimizes the Hunger Games to society at large, to use the Games' historical rituals every year to fabricate a reality where the story behind the spectacle allows it to go on. Then, another point of Flickerman's show is to keep historic time inaccessible to all of Panem, but most importantly, inaccessible to the Districts, disempowering them further.

In chapter 5 of *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord links the possession of time with political power over society and its perceptions. He discusses how the ruling class "socially

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<sup>3</sup> I am using this term in its most basic definition for this chapter: "explaining social problems as the shortcomings of individuals rather than the flaws of society" (Macionis 95).

eliminate[s] lived time” to the subordinate classes because spectacle is the “metamorphosis into a *time of things*” (Debord 78). Debord posits that spectacle defines history through the way the economy developed for the bourgeoisie’s domination over the other classes. Putting the *Hunger Games* trilogy into this context, time and history are dictated from the state to the citizens, and the state has the power to re-write reality through dictating how time is spent.

The ruling class, made up of *specialists in the possession of things* who are themselves therefore possessed by things, is forced to link its fate with the preservation of this reified history, that is, with the preservation of a new immobility *within history*. (Debord 78)

Spectacle also alienates people temporally through obscuring real-time as well as history.

Through the Annual Hunger Games, President Snow creates a cyclical time that repeats again and again so that the Districts cannot escape the spectacle, nor their fate. As President Snow uses the Hunger Games every year, going through the exact same rituals, only with different players, time has simultaneously stopped *and* become cyclical. Time has stopped for all of Panem because the spectacle exists to obsessively repeat the civil war that happened almost a century before the first *Hunger Games* book where the Districts were the belligerents and the Capitol were the heroes because they won. By repeating this “myth” of the Games every year with the same rituals, the State reminds the Districts that the Hunger Games is their fault, automatically casting all District residents as belligerents who must always be kept in check, lest a war break out again (Pavlik 31). The repetition of the “myth” even bleeds over to the District mayors, who act as direct extensions of Flickerman to their district constituents. Though readers do not hear the Mayor of District 12 say the “Treaty of Treason,” Katniss sums it up, “The Treaty of Treason gave us the new laws to guarantee peace and, as our yearly reminder that the Dark Days must never be repeated, it gave us the Hunger Games” (Collins *Hunger*

*Games* 18). President Snow's narrative creates a "false consciousness" when it comes to understanding their identities within Panem, another false unity. The Districts have their own respective histories and cultures, but Snow has obscured their histories by narrating a single, specific history from the Capitol about the Capitol and its glory. However, one aspect of their identities that Districts are allowed to have is their historic specialty, but this is always under threat of exploitation from President Snow and his spectacle.

Tributes gain sponsors through being different enough to be identified as pieces of the Annual Hunger Games, while also similar enough to the Capitol that citizens will root for them. Mortimore-Smith is astute in her claim; "Survival in the Hunger Games, then, depends more on Katniss's ability to fuel a clever deception than to exercise her precision with a bow" (158). Instead of going along with Mortimore-Smith's focus about the audience as gamemaker, I would like to focus on how the audience identifies with their particular "survivor" or "Tribute." This identification with a preferred Tribute is done through consumption of media defined "signatures" of each tribute, signatures that directly link to their district's historic specialty.

The District 1 Tributes gain the most preferential treatment from the Capitol because they are the richest district, and specialize in making the luxury clothes that Capitol citizens wear. Katniss remarks on District 1 Tributes, Marvel and Glimmer; "They look so beautiful, spray-painted silver, in tasteful tunics glittering with jewels. District 1 makes luxury items for the Capitol. You can hear the roar of the crowd. They are always favorites" (Collins *Hunger Games* 68). These tributes never have issues with getting sponsors because those in the Capitol already identify with them, and District 1 practically mascots the Capitol all of the time, this is another one of the false unities that Debord discussed (2). The Capitol and District 1 are shown

to have a comradery with one another because they view themselves as an extension of the other, but this is part of the false consciousness that Snow cultivates because District 1 is still forced to compete. Interestingly, District 1 began as a mining district, just like District 12, but they won favoritism so often with the Capitol that they were allowed to have more advanced machinery over time, so that whatever they mined could be turned into luxury items. Clearly, District 1's chronic wins led to District 1's original signature, fine raw materials, being "upgraded" to a new signature, fine raw materials that can now be turned into luxury textiles and jewelry to be sold directly to the Capitol. Katniss even mentions how coal, *her district's specialty*, can be turned into diamonds, but she makes no mention of this process occurring in her own district. In addition, District 12 is directly said to be located in the Appalachian Mountains (Collins *Hunger Games* 41), which means that they should also be able to mine graphite<sup>4</sup>, but they do not. This gives District 1 a bigger monopoly over luxury items, thus, increasing their likelihood of being "liked" and "consumed" by the Capitol. In the *Hunger Games* trilogy, consumption translates into prosperity, which creates a positive feedback effect where the other Districts get poorer as more raw goods are re-allocated to District 1 out of favoritism, producing more consumer items. District 1 is the favorite because it reflects the superiority of the Capitol that President Snow and his ilk have narrated into the Hunger Games spectacle. A form of collective narcissism.

Katniss and the other non-Career Tributes enter the arena with a severe handicap, they live so differently because they are the most exploited, which makes gaining sponsors so

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<sup>4</sup> The website for the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy for Virginia indicates that wherever coal is found in Appalachia, then graphite can be found, "Amorphous graphite results from the metamorphism of coal" (DMME.virginia.gov).

difficult. These districts are also noted by Katniss to be very solemn during the “Reaping” because the Games are a death sentence for Districts 3-12. When Katniss learns to connect with her audience and the other Tributes, she gains sponsors and her odds of survival go up drastically. This then begs the question, why is Katniss able to connect with others *in* the spectacle, but not *outside* of the spectacle? In fact, she re-connected so well with humanity in the Games that she is shown to have enough compassion to finally treat her mother as a human being, and recognize her depression, instead of a treating her as a burden.

According to Debord’s thesis “Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation” (Debord 2), which means that Katniss should be just as socially stunted in the Annual Hunger Games as she is outside of them, yet she is not. Anthony Pavlik observes that “media coverage sets up an enemy and thereby dehumanizes ‘others,’ which in turn allows soldiers to kill them without guilt and for ordinary citizens to support these actions without guilt” (36). By the propaganda logic that Snow has been using to indoctrinate her, along with the logic of the spectacle, Katniss should be dehumanizing her competition upon entering the arena, like Cato, but she does not; in fact, she strikes a sisterhood of sorts with District 11’s female Tribute, Rue. This relationship is a major turning point for Katniss as it changes her trajectory for the rest of the series. I posit that the reason for this is because the two girls enacted and symbolized true unity for the first time. Despite the occasional image of a dead Tribute in the arena and the fact that everyone is being watched now by cameras 24/7, this is the only time the Tributes are not forced to watch propaganda. No Peacekeepers around to tell them to “get back to work” or to arrest them for idling, for the first time, Katniss and Rue are not being forced to live through images, they truly experience *life* and *humanity*. There is still

the threat of imminent death from the Careers looming over their heads, but this goes away in the following days as both girls seem to forget that they are actually in the Hunger Games. Tom Henthorne is correct in his claim that the Games themselves give Tributes some agency, even if it is only a small amount of it (102), and this is because Snow's agency is limited or non-existent within spectacle itself, his agency is linked to his ISAs around the Games. Basically, life and its unity that the spectacle alienates us from was permitted to happen because the State is very limited in its ability to stop it.

Despite all of the death and mayhem surrounding them, Rue and Katniss find space to become human by escaping Snow's ideology, and in fact, enter their own space of District ideologically defined reality. But they need to discover their true realities first in to eliminate their false consciousness, and the first step is to understand, or rather, to narrate the histories of the Districts that Snow has hidden. The first information that they want to know is how similar or different their districts truly are, and Katniss comes to the painful realization that District 11 is oppressed far worse than 12. Most of the deadly tracker jacker nests were removed in District 12, but not in District 11 (Collins *Hunger Games* 200). Neither girls realize it, but their attempts to create *real* unity through shared humanity delivers the first true critique of the spectacle; "the division it presents is unitary, while the unity it presents is divided" (Debord 22). The Careers appear more unified than Katniss and Rue, but this is a false front because all of them know that when it is only the four of them left, they will turn on each other. Only Katniss and Rue understand that their divisions, manufactured by Snow's society, are actually the factor that unites them, which is why their mics were cut during their dialogue; "I wonder if the Gamemakers are blocking out our conversation, because even though the

information seems harmless, they don't want people in different districts to know about one another" (Collins *Hunger Games* 203). This moment reveals that keeping the Districts mysterious to each other prevents a revolution, and that alliances like this are not tolerated. Alliances in the Games are meant to be there for a more thrilling bloodbath—"The strong band together to hunt down the weak then, when the tension becomes too great, begin to turn on one another" (Collins *Hunger Games* 159). By doing this, Rue and Katniss are playing the Games on their own terms, not the spectators,' they refuse to stay pawns in Snow's game by making an alliance that is to help each other and keep each other alive. This is the antithesis of what the spectacle of the Hunger Games is about these Tributes are representatives from their hailing Districts; they are supposed to be the violent murderous beasts that the Capitol makes them out to be during the Treaty of Treason that is read every year before the Reaping. This haven of unity and humanity is not to last, the Games operate under its own ideology, and the girls will eventually be found.

President Snow was incorrect when he blamed the revolts in the Districts on Katniss' "trick with the berries" (Collins *Hunger Games* 375), it was actually Rue's death that caused the Districts to finally revolt because Katniss publicly mourned her. Rue is described by Collins as having "bright, dark eyes and satiny brown skin" (Collins *Hunger Games* 98), and is played by African-American actor, Amandla Stenberg in Gary Ross' adaptation. In addition, Rue's and Thresh's district, District 11 is located in the Deep South, which means that there is a racial element on top of the severe oppression that District 11 faces. As Moore and Coleman discuss in "Starving for Diversity: Ideological Implications of Race Representations in the Hunger Games," Katniss' unlikely friendship with this Tribute is unique in "overwhelmingly White

Panem” (948). Their friendship is complicated by the fact that Rue is a Black girl who dies and sacrifices herself, inadvertently, so that the White girl, Katniss, may live, so the trilogy fails at racial inclusion by falling into “tokenism.” However, their friendship is crucial for correcting the false-consciousness that Snow’s narrative creates; “Rue provides a martyr figure around which the audience (like the poor populations in the film) can feel outrage towards those who control the Games.” (786). A large part of this outrage from Panem over Rue is due to the racial dynamics that Snow is intentionally attempting to hide, something more savvy readers understand. The narrative he sells is that all Districts have an equal chance, but this is simply not true. Rue and Thresh have distinct disadvantages in the Games due in part to their race. Rue is small and thin, nobody wants to partner up with her other than Thresh because they are the racial “Other” (Moore and Coleman 948). Thresh recognizes that stereotypes about Black men are the reason why the Careers may want him (Collins *Hunger Games* 128), which is why he refuses to be their game piece as well as Snow’s, and chooses to spare Katniss because of her kindness towards Rue (Collins *Hunger Games* 288). By partnering with Rue, the girls displayed unity that crosses class, geographic lines, and race, which terrifies Snow.

To show President Snow that Rue was “more than a piece in their games” (Collins *Hunger Games* 237), Katniss covers her body in bright flowers from a forest, she prepares the body for a funeral viewing for all of Panem when her body is eventually picked up and recorded. The purpose of this is to hold the Capitol accountable for her death, and to show District 11 that Katniss mourns with them, and more, as she “press[es] the three middle fingers of [her] left hand against [her] lips and hold them out in [Rue’s] direction” (Collins *Hunger Games* 237). This is the sign for District 12 that goes so far back into Panem’s history that



nobody truly knows what it means anymore, but they sometimes use it “at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration, it means good-bye to someone you love” (Collins *Hunger Games* 24). When Katniss buried Rue, she reminded Panem, and herself, that Tributes are not game pieces, they are human, and the Games are not acceptable, this act injects humanity into the Annual Hunger Games. Katniss’ humanity is also displayed upon threatening to commit suicide with the Nightlock berries if she and Peeta cannot go home, she would rather die than murder Peeta just because Snow demands one Victor. Unfortunately for Snow, Panem has already fallen in love with Katniss and Peeta, and not allowing them to live could cause a riot in the Capitol and the Districts. His solution is to turn them into celebrities so that they can promote peace and quell dissent, but this too backfires on him.

President Snow depends on the Hunger Games to keep him in power through distracting a populace and creating an arrestment of time that is simultaneously cyclical. When he allowed Katniss to live, he unknowingly granted her more power by turning her in to a commodity.

[Celebrities] act out various lifestyles or sociopolitical viewpoints in a *full, totally free manner*. They embody the inaccessible results of social *labor* by dramatizing the by-products of that labor which are magically projected above it as its ultimate goals: *power and vacations*—the decision making and consumption that are at the beginning and the end of a process that is never questioned. (Debord 24)

Though celebrity status is viewed negatively by Debord, only through her celebrity Katniss becomes the revolutionary figure of the Mockingjay. In Debord’s *Society*, people no longer have power, instead, it is the commodity of celebrity that sways people and convinces them to buy into the spectacle. Snow may be the president of Panem, and therefore, can annihilate any of the Districts (which he does a couple times), but he requires a complex positive feedback

system of the Hunger Games and the ISAs that simultaneously keep him in power while justifying the use of the Hunger Games. The celebrity of the Victors is part of this feedback system as he needs Katniss to endorse the Games. She provided the “spark” of revolution with her display of humanity, after she covered Rue’s body—a first in the Games—District 11 sent her bread in response, another first for the Games (Collins *Hunger Games* 234). Katniss cannot figure out why the bread was sent, but she speculates, “Or because, like me, they don’t like to let debts go unpaid? For whatever reason, this is a first. A district gift to a tribute who’s not your own” (Collins *Hunger Games* 239). The ultimate message behind the bread was unity—District 11 stands with District 12—but Katniss does not understand this until her Victory Tour. Here District 11 hails her as a “friend” as they too whistle the Mockingjay cry and hold out their fingers to sign for District 12 (Collins *Catching Fire* 18). As people in District 11 are executed for this, Katniss not only realizes the power of her new celebrity for unity, President Snow—and later, President Alma Coin—also realizes this and intends to use this budding revolutionary figure to be his commodified Mockingjay, which is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

When Katniss pulled her stunt with the berries, she sparked a rebellion by accident through being a high profile person—later a celebrity as a Victor of the 74<sup>th</sup> games—who accidentally bucked the system. Since the Games are spectacle, the end goal of having one Victor goes “unanswered” in the sense that this is the way that the spectacle has always been done. When Katniss made these humanitarian “firsts” by protecting Rue, she caused time to go from arrested and cyclical to linear. Katniss’ true critique of the Games is that they have too high a human cost, and they are rigged in favor of the Districts who look like the Capitol. This

critique put humanity back into the spectacle, which woke up the Districts, and their ensuing revolt indicates that they no longer have a false consciousness. The chain of events that followed after Katniss won is proof of this linear time as Snow must now try to figure out a way to get rid of Katniss. In *Catching Fire*, the Quarter Quell, the 75<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games occurs, and there is a rule change for the first time: the Reaping consists of established Victors and not potential Tributes. Katniss sparked the revolution, and President Snow accidentally created more linear time that the Districts can use to revolt because they now have a history of oppression that was narrated by Katniss through her actions in the game. Snow also gave Katniss an “image,” and this image is a positive populous one that the Districts, the petite bourgeoisie, and even the Capitol admire. Though Katniss sees no admiration or valiance in her decisions, the Capitol falls in love with her for it because, though it is authentic, it is presented to them as spectacular and it effectively disrupted the fake spectacle, it is a “Real spectacle.” However, as discussed in the next chapter, the dominant culture tries to maintain its dominance over the cultural narrative by re-appropriating the real spectacle back into the fake.

## CHAPTER 2

### SELLING THE HUNGER GAMES

The authoritarian ideology that the Annual Hunger Games delivers, along with the media culture around it, leads Panem to Debord's Thesis 12, "What appears is good; what is good appears" (4). The embodiment of this thesis is Caesar Flickerman, who tells Katniss, "Nothing you say will be wrong," (Collins *Hunger Games* 366) after she defies President Snow with nightlock berries. Katniss has just won the Games with Peeta, and Snow is displeased with her for harnessing his spectacle against him, but there is nothing that he can do about this. In this moment, Peeta and Katniss are the newest victors, which makes them cultural icons to Panem. In his essay on "Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle," Douglas Kellner claims, "In a global media culture, celebrities are the manufactured and managed deities of the contemporary moment. Celebrities are the icons of media culture, the gods and goddesses of everyday life." (60). Culturally, Katniss and Peeta possess more power than Flickerman President Snow, who has the power of the State because he *is* the state.

As discussed in the previous chapter, up until Katniss' critique with the berries and Seneca Crane's execution after the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Hunger Games, President Snow's locus of power within Panem was the Hunger Games as they had been able to deliver and perpetuate his ideology as dominant. This chapter explores how he also relied on a complex system of positive feedback from the commodities, economy, and interpellation that the spectacle of the Annual Hunger Games needs in order to keep reproducing *itself*. It is when President Snow, and to a lesser extent, President Alma Coin of District 13, begins to use the Hunger Games as a means to an end for his ideological power that Panem comes unraveled because there creates competing

ideologies: the Hunger Games is an end to itself, it only needs enough victors to keep its ideology appropriate and potential rebellions at bay that it is not too unreasonable; President Snow needs the Hunger Games, and eventually, the “Girl on Fire,” Katniss when she is a celebrity of the spectacle, to endorse and legitimize his reign as punitive enough towards the Districts without being too violent. Though Snow controls Caesar Flickerman’s position, he has ironically given Flickerman, and by extension, the Victors on Flickerman’s show, the power to potentially sway the public against him because of the nature of the spectacle that he has created. He even grants the stylist, Cinna, the power to start a revolution through making an image for District 12’s “Girl on Fire,” since Snow has primed the citizens of Panem to identify with power through spectacular fashion. Bizarrely, President Snow grants Katniss more power of celebrity in the sequel to the *Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), with the hopes that she will return this with actual loyalty. Realizing the mistake he made in the first book by allowing her to live with Peeta, Snow believes that there is a district revolt happening because Katniss successfully beat him at his own game, but this is not true, she defeated him in spectacle through being the “Girl on Fire” and delivering Debord’s critical truths.

Many scholars have concerned themselves with the reason why Katniss beat the state at its own game. Latham and Hollister argue that Katniss beat President Snow at his own game through superior media literacy and other skills that President Snow inadvertently taught her. The crux of their argument is, “In that sense the government inadvertently has fostered the very skills that allow Katniss not only to survive the Games, but also to play a key role in defeating the Capitol” (36). Amy Montz takes a more aesthetic approach to this topic in her essay, “Costuming the resistance: The Female Spectacle of the Rebellion,” in which Montz

discusses how “The spectacle she has become is itself a rebellious demonstration of the power of costuming, fashion, and femininity” (139). For Montz, Katniss’ fashion as the rebellious figure, “The Girl on Fire,” or the Mockingjay, initially strips her of agency, but ultimately ends with agency when Katniss learns to control the gaze that objectifies her. Montz then goes on to argue how *The Hunger Games* “understands the benefit of ‘photogenic’ staging’s that use the bodies of women to speak to a literate viewing audience” (142). Tracing how Katniss went from the “Girl on Fire” subjected to the aggressive male gaze, to the Mockingjay, Montz ultimately argues that Katniss’ power as a Tribute lay in the power of spectacle. Montz argues that public spectacle gives Katniss the power to manipulate the audience for survival and to aid the rebellion, but the audience gaze strips her of her agency as a woman and a person due to the objectification her costuming causes through consumption (161). Montz’s argument is close to my own in the sense that we are both concerned with how Katniss was empowered to become a rebellious figure by the very thing that was meant to break her, the spectacle of the Hunger Games; however, Montz takes the male gaze into consideration in her analysis, and this is where we significantly deviate. Likewise, Dierdre Byurne argues “Katniss’s clothing signals her entrapment in power inequalities, especially those of gender and class, and also serves as a continual reminder of her mortality, fragility and dependence on state systems” (46). Her article, “Dressed for the Part: An Analysis of Clothing in Suzanne Collins’s *Hunger Games* Trilogy,” ultimately argues that Katniss is turned into a rebellious figure by her costuming as the Mockingjay, which she claims is “coerced” (45). With as much overwhelming research claiming that the costuming strips Katniss of agency, I cannot deny this, especially since rebel president, Alma Coin, would not allow Peeta to have immunity from punishment until Katniss became her

Mockingjay. However, Katniss exerts enough agency as the Mockingjay that she is permitted to live after unexpectedly executing President Coin instead of President Snow. Scholarship has not reconciled this paradox other than the explanation that Katniss has learned to use or “master” a type of gender and/or class oppressive “gaze.” Katniss *initially* loses her sense of *self* as she feels alienated in these costumes because she has all at once become a vehicle for ideology—an ISA for Snow *and then* Coin—and is fully emerged in the spectacle as she is now part of maintaining it.

Like Latham and Hollister, I argue that President Snow gave Katniss the “tools” to dismantle his reign, but I argue this point while focusing on how Snow has conditioned Panem into believing anything so long as it has the trapping of spectacle. Katniss herself may not have sought to unite the Districts, but the celebrity image that Cinna, Flickerman, and Snow, help her create unites the districts under a real cry. Katniss must still “sell” the rebellion, just as Snow has “sold” his oppressive Annual Hunger Games, but the platform on which she does so was given to her by President Snow and the very system of spectacular oppression that was meant to keep people like her in an ideological “check” to the dominant.

According to Althusser’s work on interpellation and ideology, the dominant ideology determines the placement of an individual in society through subjecting them to a specific identity within Lacan’s symbolic order of language (137)<sup>5</sup>, but one is always born into ideology. It is when this individual is interpellated into the dominant that they, and everyone else, discover what their “identity”—their position or place—is in mainstream society because it

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<sup>5</sup> Althusser’s “interpellation” does this (117).

creates a discourse about their identity<sup>6</sup>. However, what about those of whom are dissenters in society? According to Althusser, this would be when RSAs come in and either the individual will conform because they are coerced by society to do so, or society will continue to exclude/punish the individual (Althusser 97). Simple, but unsatisfying when popular dissenting ideologies are considered against the dominant, and take hold in mainstream culture—like Katniss and her new “Girl on Fire” image. Even in authoritarian Panem, there will always be dissenting ideologies to Snow’s, and these ideologies must be dealt with, but Althusser’s theory does not elaborate on dissenting opinions beyond RSAs. Johnathan Fiske, a cultural media critic, elaborated on a more class-conflict centric reading and re-interpretation of the concepts of ideology and interpellation that were laid out by Althusser.

In Fiske’s essay “Culture, Ideology, Interpellation,” he argues the dominant ideology is “not a whole, but a complex network of groups, each with different interests and related to each other in terms of their power relationship with dominant classes” (1268). For cultural studies, Fiske claims, that ideology is used to describe how “a dominant class wins the willing consent of the subordinate classes to the system that ensures their subordination” (1273). He then goes on to explain how the dominant ideology must constantly re-enforce itself through class struggles because “for Althusser, ideology is not a static set of ideas imposed upon the subordinate by the dominant classes, but rather a dynamic process constantly reproduced and reconstituted in practice” (1269). Fiske explains that which Althusser’s interpellation cannot:

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<sup>6</sup> Althusser’s “ideological recognition function” (116) helps create this discourse; “You and I always already subjects, and as such, constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition” (117). These rituals of ideological recognition are actually what Althusser considers “of the most elementary of everyday life” (117), such as a handshake or being hailed by a friend. Any everyday discourse that marks a person’s unique identity gives us “consciousness” of our existence through recognition (117).



what happens when dominant ideology must confront a dissenting ideology? The answer is that the dissenting ideology and its subjects are reconfigured in “ways that suit the interests of the dominant class” (1273), thereby, re-interpellating its subjects and reproducing its own dominance. However, a dissenting ideology can easily become an identity for a group of people who feel as if they have no social power, as this identity has given them a platform on which to agitate for their own needs. Fiske defines “Social power”—“the power to get one’s class or group interest served by social structures as a whole, and social struggle [class struggle], is the contestation of this power by subordinate groups” (1272). A dissenting ideology can actually grant a group of individuals a social power that they would not normally have because it creates a social homogenization over an issue, or set of issues. Accordingly, the dominant culture can either demonize these groups, or, more often, “naturalize” the dissenting group’s discourse (Fiske 1273), and claim it as its own for the betterment of society. This means that the dominant culture essentially appropriates the issues of the subordinate, thereby, absorbing the dissenting ideology into itself, neutralizing its threat. Often, in post-modern times, this appropriation and naturalization of the threat is done through various media performances and turning dissent into “appropriate” spectacle that may be novel to the mainstream. An example of this act from Collins’s *Hunger Games* trilogy is the way Katniss, as the new “Girl on Fire,” is treated with her celebrity status in *Catching Fire*.

As I have mentioned in the introduction of this work, President Snow’s ideology is the dominant ideology of Suzanne Collins’s *Hunger Games*, since he is able to impose his will on the Districts, despite the fact that his bourgeoisie ideology clashes with their own. Using the “Peacekeepers,” a repressional state apparatus (RSA), he can force District parents to send their

children to their death by the spectacle of the Annual Hunger Games. Every year, before the Games begin, Snow makes an announcement, re-narrating to Katniss and other District children that it is an honor to be chosen because they have the opportunity to bring pride and prosperity to their respective districts. After all, the Hunger Games are a yearly spectacle, and the culture of mass media surrounding the Games is spectacle as well, which leads to Victors having too much power. As Debord predicted in Thesis 212, the spectacle is the concrete “*materialization of ideology brought about by the concrete success of an automated system of economic production—which virtually identifies social reality with an ideology that has remodeled all reality in its own image*” (114). The spectacle of the Annual Hunger Games was brought about due to the success of the Capitol’s economic structure, which is repeated by the mayor of each District before the Reaping each year.

As President Snow is selling the narrative that the Annual Hunger Games are a better alternative to civil war, the manner in which the spectacle is presented is important. Without getting into analytical psychology, and staying within the boundaries of Debord’s spectacle, Snow’s presentation of himself as a Jungian archetypal “Father” to Panem is significant to his power. Going back to the beginning of storytelling itself, the archetype of the father figure means to convey to readers a certain cultural expectation whenever a person or figure fits the archetype. According to Barbara Greenfield, “the father figure encompasses the roles of creator, lawgiver, impregnator, and master....the lawgiver, and stands for order or even repression” (192). Without going into her feminist analysis of the archetype, this means that in advertising or in television, which now represents real life, a figure signaling meets this archetype will evoke the need to conform to rules and order. Since this archetype is embedded

in Western cultural memory, and Panem is North America, President Snow has cultivated this image, despite political office—or rather, *because* of his political office—as the Annual Hunger Games is his locus of power because he has situated himself as the father of Panem. The way he situates himself is directly related to how he presents the Annual Hunger Games; “Our horses pull our chariot right up to President Snow’s mansion, and we come to a halt. The music ends with a flourish. The president, a small, thin man with paper-white hair, gives the official welcome from a balcony above us” (Collins *Hunger Games* 71). Though Snow’s narrative says the Games are about the Districts and the Tributes, they not, the Games are *all* about Snow and maintaining his power, and his “image,” because he is part of the spectacle. By situating himself as the father of the Hunger Games, he further embeds his control over Panem. As Althusser says, “an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material” (112),” meaning that this ritual, a materialization of Snow’s ideology as the ruling father, indoctrinates the particular view that Snow’s power is absolute.

The definition of ideology itself is Marxian in nature, “A set of beliefs underlying the customs, habits and practices common to a given social group” (Murphin and Ray 235). Given this definition, immediately, ideology is understood to convey a sense of social inequality through a hierarchy. The definition of ideology also says, “Ideology governs our perceptions, judgements, and prejudices—our sense of what is acceptable, normal, and deviant. It may cause a revolution; it may also allow discrimination and even exploitation” (Murphin and Ray 235). Identity in ideology is determined by discourse in these material practices, such as Snow situating himself as the “Great Father” with the District Tributes below him. On the surface, the discourse this imagery gives readers/spectators is that of the benevolent father, who examines

the children before they are sent to bed and the adults partake in the party. This is the message that this aspect of spectacle is supposed to send the unthinking masses in the Capitol, it makes the Games seem more humane and hides its true sinister nature: class inequality to keep Snow and the ruling classes of the Capitol in power. After all, the child Tributes are stand ins for the Districts in the spectacle (Koenig 41). Stemming from his “fatherly” persona, Snow’s Peacekeepers treat the Districts as children by telling them that it is for their safety that they are kept out of the woods, but this is another façade of the benevolent father to the Districts. Katniss knows this as she remarks in the first book, “District Twelve. Where you can starve to death in safety” (Collins *Hunger Games* 6). The Peacekeepers only get their name because they are “peace keeping” for the Capitol by keeping the Districts reliant on the Capitol for food, the real reason why they keep District residents outside of the woods. Pavlik notes, “people in the districts are herded and shepherded within areas surrounded by tall electrified fences, making the districts akin to animal pens” (31). The Districts are free labor and only the Capitol is supposed to reap the benefits of their labor.

President Snow’s positioning as the “father of Panem” has a more malicious message to the anomic Districts. By standing above the Tributes, who are below the partying Capitol citizens, who are below the balcony occupied by President Snow, we see the real hierarchy of Panem revealed—the rules do not apply to Snow, he is above them, just as he is above *all* of Panem. Here, he reminds them that at any moment, he can momentarily strip them of their social power that was granted through the Annual Hunger Games, and re-establish himself as the ultimate authority in Panem, reminding Tributes and Victors that he can give and take their limited agency in the Games. Even this spectacle that momentarily grants the Tributes and

Victors some agency is not for the Districts, it is for Snow, the Games and the economy were specifically built or augmented to keep him in power. Flickerman is there to provide the citizens of the Capitol with entertainment and information, but his primary purpose is to act more like an ISA than a journalist.

Immediately, Caesar Flickerman's description is more that of a caricature than man—"He looks freakish but less frightening than he did last year when his color was crimson" (Collins *Hunger Games* 125)—and this is the point; he is no longer human in the sense of autonomous thought, instead, he is nothing more than an arm of President Snow's power that is dressed up in a costume, a ISA. In the Society of Panem's Spectacle, Flickerman is essential to the narrative that Snow feeds to his populace because it is how he has been able to "sell" his ideology. Flickerman's purpose in the trilogy is slowly revealed that he is actually an ideological state apparatus (ISA) whose function is to be artificially "human" in order to make the Hunger Games sensational in a way that is easy for everyone to swallow and accept. Althusser does not discuss people in terms of ISAs, he only speaks of private institutions, such as the "educational ISA" and the "mass media ISA" (Althusser 96); however, since Flickerman determines the material existence of the mass media ISA because he is always the not-quite-so-human host, Flickerman himself is an ISA. After all, Flickerman and the media ISA are practically interchangeable—Flickerman is always part of the spectacle of the Annual Hunger Games, which cannot properly function without him—his function is to sell Snow's ideology, like all ISAs (Althusser 97). Through Flickerman, Panem is permitted to feel emotion about the Games, but it is Flickerman's job to take any negative emotion towards the Hunger Games and turn the emotion positive. Katniss remarks that Flickerman's magic seems to be that he "can turn a weak

response into a memorable one by the way he reacts” (Collins *Hunger Games* 125). Katniss is under the impression that Flickerman is there to help the tributes, and she is incorrect; his primary function is to keep a captive audience for the Games, and to always keep them involved in the spectacle. A more sinister point of Flickerman is that the Games have colonized life and degraded it to the point that any real emotion, such as the collective grief that is felt by the audience when Katniss holds her sister one more time before heading to her death, must be positively interpreted back into the spectacle. Fiske calls this act an “attempt to ‘naturalize’ the meanings” of the dissent in favor of the dominant (1269), “naturalizing” it is a power move from the dominant class to ensure that dissent is neutralized through re-interpellation back into the dominant culture in an acceptable way.

In the *Hunger Games* trilogy, naturalization by Flickerman is to ensure that people are emotionally involved with the Annual Hunger Games in the right way, to ensure that there is no unity through experiencing the Tributes’ pain of separation from their families and that Tributes will die for the sake of the dominant classes. Flickerman is to falsely unite them through the entertainment of the spectacle, which must always be positive because though the spectacle is always good, what it produces must always be good as well (Debord 2). Katniss demonstrates how this is a double edged sword when she delivers her true critiques. When Flickerman asks Katniss what her favorite thing is about the Capitol, she answers that it is “Lamb stew”; “He turned sideways to the audience in horror, hand on his stomach. “It doesn’t show, does it?” They shout reassurances to him and applaud” (Collins *Hunger Games* 127). Flickerman’s job is to erase spectator emotion for the Games by artificially feeling for them, and then re-directing this emotion towards excitement for the Games’ outcomes. The results of this action are

evident with Katniss, his very brief acknowledgement of the fact that Katniss is likely starving allows for brief moments of sadness for the effect of a collective catharsis. This allows the audience a brief moment to wake up from the drug of spectacle, allowing Katniss' true critique permits the audience to "struggle in practice among the irreconcilable enemies of spectacle" (Debord 117), here the enemy is hunger; but the audience will not see her true critique because Flickerman only gives off a false impression that the audience is in control of the entertainment before naturalizing the emotion into a message about the good of the Games. He ends his interview with Katniss by discussing how she got to the Hunger Games by volunteering in her sister's stead. Flickerman prods for details as "The audience is frozen, hanging on [her] every word," he intends to make her feel comfortable with sharing these details, "But instead of warmth, [Katniss] feel[s] an icy rigidity take over [her] body" (Collins *Hunger Games* 129). As with Katniss' favorite part of the Capitol being the food (in abundance), this moment has the potential to be a true critique of the spectacle, and it momentarily does because the room fell so quiet, "you could hear a pin drop" (Collins *Hunger Games* 129). According to Debord, part of revolution is waking the spectators up from the drug of spectacle, and a way to do this is one must "search for critical truth about the spectacle," which must "be a true critique" (Debord 117). Talking about the abundance of food and taking her sister's place in the Reaping causes Katniss to deliver a critique about the spectacle *and* Snow. Katniss tells the audience that the Hunger Games is not about having fun for the Capitol, and it is not about "glory" or "penance" for the Districts; the Hunger Games are a real scenario of life and death for those in the Districts, becoming a Tribute was not a choice and it is not an honor, and families have been torn apart, all for the entertainment of the Capitol and to keep Snow in power.

Flickerman ends the interview with Katniss as a Tribute when she tells him that, her entire reason for being in the Capitol was to win the Games and come back to her sister; “‘I bet you did,’ says Caesar, giving me a squeeze. The buzzer goes off. ‘Sorry we’re out of time. Best of luck, Katniss Everdeen, tribute from District Twelve.’” (Collins *Hunger Games* 129). Flickerman took Katniss’ tragedy and turned it into part of her image, his job is subtle, but important for keeping Snow in power, and, accidentally, taking part in starting the revolution. By taking Katniss’ story and making it part of her image, Flickerman re-wrote her narrative from “unwilling Tribute” to the “tragic hero.” He has given the Capitol someone to identify with and to root for, instead of someone to pity and potentially exclude from the Games, thus, helping the spectacle of the Games to keep reproducing itself. It should be noted that Snow is *never* interviewing anyone, it *must* be Flickerman. Snow is the state, and Flickerman is his ISA who must simultaneously serve as his “mouthpiece” to legitimize his rule, while also keeping up the façade of the hunger Games as morally justified. This is why his interviews with the Gamemakers each year *before* the start of the Hunger Games is so important.

The Annual Hunger Games further degrades life because it requires the fragmentation of the Districts in order to be successful. The Games are for the Capitol to enjoy, not the Districts, therefore, Snow and his Gamemaker cannot have the Districts re-uniting behind their backs, rigging the Games or destroying the spectacle with another revolt. Paradoxically, the spectacle must display unity, not the “unity of that life,” but an image of unity (Debord 2). Though Debord is referring to advertisements and literal objects as commodities, his thesis applies to the Annual Hunger Games because this spectacle has been commodified and integrated into Panem’s culture so deeply that it has become one of the few commonalities



between people in the districts and those in the capitol: it unites them, albeit in a bizarre way, while also creating disunity. When the Tributes are ritualistically paraded around the Capitol in fine garments and hairstyles that are supposed to represent the purpose of each District, this is the moment for Capitol residents to identify with, and sponsor their new favorite Tribute. Here, unity and disunity meet in a rather paradoxical way. Unity is seen through the imagery that is created in the parade of Tributes, all 12 districts are together and there is visual unity between the districts as well as the Capitol through costuming; however, this unity has created a disunity through the same mechanisms, the different costumes of each district reminds us of the distinct class inequality between them all. Districts 1 and 2 wear more stylish costumes, but the further down the line, the more plain the costumes are, especially District 12, the coal mining District. Katniss even remarks how plain and black her dress is. As Montz pointed out, visual styles and costumes are very important to the rebellion, “Resistance groups use costuming and dress in order to present an organized and visual spectacle” (140). Costuming is imperative for unity and connection between the Districts and Capitol, making style an important part of the rebellion later in the trilogy.

When images determine lived reality and identification, “style” becomes an important tool for communication, especially since the citizens of Panem have been conditioned since birth to respect the authority of people who dress in Capitol style. In order to reach her petite-bourgeoise audience, and the Capitol, *and* the Districts, Katniss will have to be their Caesar Flickerman; she must become the larger than life celebrity that breaks it down and explains it all. Just as Districts 1 and 2 “mascot” the Capitol, Katniss must be the mascot of the rebellion. In the tourism industry, anthropomorphized destination mascots are considered “place identity

markers, cultural constructs, bonding tools, social engagement tools, and information carriers.” (Radomskaya and Pearce Abstract). Though this article refers to people dressed as cartoonish animals, the same principles apply to the mascots, the Tributes, of Panem’s ideologies because they are meant to achieve the same effect. “According to Callahan and Ledgerwood (2016), groups seem to have a general sense that such symbols are an important element of group experience: their presence can make a group feel more connected, comfortable, and unified” (Radomskaya and Pearce 84). Therefore, “Mascoting” is a symbolic language and a performance that is vital to false and true unity in Panem.

As discussed previously, the effect of the spectacle with Snow and the Tributes riding towards his home with the Capitol citizens beneath him, celebrating, is multifaceted, but its primary effect is to show everyone that this is mass spectacle, everyone participates. This is the false, surface level unity; “The language of the spectacle consists of signs of the ruling production, which at the same time are the ultimate goal of this production” (Debord 3). President Snow requires Katniss to “mascot,” or represent, Capitol supremacy by showing off how much better she is now that she is a Victor, thereby subconsciously promoting the Games as beneficial to the Districts. President Coin requires this of her as the Mockingjay as well, to promote District 13’s supremacy as the Mockingjay.

When Katniss is the “Girl on Fire” for Snow and the Mockingjay for Coin, she enables people to understand why their ideology is more favorable than what they already have through symbols. The ruling production of Panem demands that everyone participate in the Games, but Cinna primes the populace for revolt through dressing Katniss up in symbols of the Districts. Katniss may be the Girl on Fire turned Mockingjay, but she is only the vehicle for the

spectacle of revolution that Cinna crafted. I disagree with Montz that Katniss' locus of power as a rebel leader coming later when *she* decides to become the Mockingjay (146); Katniss has already been flexing her rebellious muscles as the "Girl on Fire" since the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games in the first book. When people wear the sign of the Mockingjay, make the District 12 sign with their fingers, braid their hair or whistle Katniss' and Rue's tune, they are not expressing solidarity with the revolution, or Coin, they are expressing solidarity with Katniss. This solidarity is what Snow wishes to harness in order to stay in power—a symbol of dissent interpellated back into the dominant culture as acceptably "quirky"—and he intends to harness it through the romance narrative that Peeta and Katniss created in the Games, the supposed "spark" of revolution. Snow is only interested in watching Katniss insofar as how it "affects [her] dynamic with Peeta, thereby affecting the mood in the districts," (Collins *Hunger Games* 375). Katniss cannot escape the spectacle because she is now part of it and her existence from now on is only to keep perpetuating it, but she cannot, and Snow was prophetic about this; "Your stylist turned out to be prophetic in his wardrobe choice. Katniss Everdeen, the girl who was on fire, you have provided a spark that, left unattended, may grow to an inferno that destroys Panem" (Collins *Hunger Games* 375). In this sense, Cinna is who started the revolution.

Upon first meeting Cinna, he tells Katniss his goal: to make her unforgettable in the arena (Collins *Hunger Games* 66). Cinna creates a way for all of Panem to love her. While wearing the fantastic, gaudy costumes of the Capitol, Katniss realizes, "Cinna was right about the minimal makeup, we both look more attractive but utterly recognizable" (Collins *Hunger Games* 70). Katniss is not just identifiable to the Capitol, but to the Districts too, she mascots both as this creates the social cohesion and group identity that Randomskaya and Pearce

discussed; Cinna is attempting a true symbolic unification between all of Panem. Cinna is uncomfortable because he knows that he is also playing with fire when he designs Katniss' costumes. District 12 is not supposed to win the Games, Districts 1 or 2 are, and when District 12 wins, their family is obliterated, like Haymitch's<sup>7</sup>. Unlike Haymitch though, Katniss is so popular with the Capitol that even Snow knows that hurting her or her family will cause the spark of dissent to turn into a blaze of revolution. Katniss, who won the Games with her District ideology and survival skills (Hanlon 61), symbolizes all of District 12 through wardrobe<sup>8</sup>, as well as acts of mercy, kindness, and sisterhood—she is the symbol of the District proletariat, and true unity for all. If she is punished for winning, then Panem will *know* that the Games are meant to keep the same players winning year after year. Panem will know that the Capitol, or, rather, *President Snow* and his regime, have been rigging the Games through the Gamemakers<sup>9</sup> to help more “desirable”<sup>10</sup> Tributes become Victors. In other words, Snow's spectacle, narrated as creating a sort of equal opportunity for Districts to win and escape the Capitol's wrath, is false. Katniss' costumes are supposed to be a liminal space of class so that she may be recognizable as the District 12 Tribute by all, which is why Snow killed Cinna in *Catching Fire*—Cinna stopped following the old “script” for his role as District 12's stylist. Katniss says that

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<sup>7</sup> It needs to be noted that Haymitch won on a “fluke,” he accidentally killed one of the stronger tributes through exposing a “weakness” in the Games' domes; whatever flies out of the “abyss” comes directly back. This culminated in the District 1 Tribute throwing her axe at a young, scrawny Haymitch, only to have it come flying back, “burying itself in her head” (Collins *Catching Fire* 58). This ended the Games in an unsatisfying way for Snow.

<sup>8</sup> Cinna came up with the “Girl on Fire” moniker and costume because you “burn [coal]” (Collins *Hunger Games* 66)

<sup>9</sup> In book one, after Katniss has won the Games, Snow tells her that he has had Seneca Crane executed because he was not smart enough to have literally “blown [her] to dust” (Collins *Hunger Games* 375)

<sup>10</sup> I use desirable in quotations here because this sort of Tribute turned Victor would be more like District 1's Cashmere and Gloss. “Cashmere starts the ball rolling with a speech about how she just can't stop crying when she thinks of how much the people in the Capitol must be suffering because they will lose us. Gloss recalls the kindness shown here to him and his sister” (Collins *Catching Fire* 71).

District 12 is always the least spectacular of the Tributes, which leads to less sponsors, thus, perpetuating the old cyclical system. Katniss assumes that Cinna is her stylist because he is “new,” but he corrects her and says that he “asked for District 12” explaining no further (Collins *Hunger Games* 64). Later, it comes to light that he requested District 12 because he was in on the rebellion, as shown when Katniss receives his Mockingjay prototype suit (Collins *Mockingjay* 37). Cinna was Katniss’ stylist so that she was equipped to lead the revolution through the language of celebrity and spectacle, while outfitted with symbols of District 12 ideology to encourage recognition.

Cinna and Flickerman made the Capitol love Katniss so much that there is even a call to stop the 75<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games, the Quarter Quell, and the truth behind the spectacle comes to light as it unravels and shows its weaknesses: the bourgeoisie consuming spectacle must stay happy with it. As the audience is bidding farewell to the Victors, who are the new Tributes in the Quarter Quell, riots begin in the Capitol. Katniss realizes why they are unhappy, they are about to lose their favorite commodity; “No more me, no more star-crossed lovers living happily ever after, no more wedding. I can see even Caesar’s professionalism showing some cracks” (Collins *Catching Fire* 72). In an attempt to get rid of Katniss, President Snow causes the “spark” of dissent to spread to the Capitol, and it is dissent that was made acceptable by him when he turned Katniss’ rebellious act into an image. President Snow forgot one of the most important things about spectacle, everyone is hypnotized by it (Debord 6), and nobody, not even President Snow, can escape it. Snow turned Katniss into a rebel, directly and indirectly, in an attempt to control the Games, which in turn, cannot be controlled. Applying Fiske (1273), this image gives people a platform to agitate on because they identify more with the unfairness

of life that Katniss' image comes to represent. However, due to Snow's actions, Katniss became more than the "Girl on Fire," she has now become the tragic hero to Panem as the "Mockingjay," the young woman who beat all of the odds to send herself and her District partner back home. The people do not want to see her go for the very reasons that Snow wants to get rid of her: her humanity and her ability to make them feel.

Spectacular oppositions conceal the *unity of poverty*. If different forms of the same alienation struggle against each other in the guise of irreconcilable antagonisms, this is because they are all based on real contradictions that are repressed. (Debord 25-26).

The Games have pitted the Districts and the Capitol against each other for almost a century, and they are all miserable.

The Districts' misery is far more palpable and felt by readers, after all, this is a proletariat story. But what of the the Capitol's misery? Their misery is more hidden by literal fake smiles. This may be why the Capitol loves Katniss more than the others, she is real and human in the face of the fake, even in her interviews with Flickerman, it is almost impossible for her to be anyone but herself. Collins implies that Cinna joined the rebellion because he felt too alienated from life and himself. Katniss is even shocked upon first meeting him because he is so unlike all of the others in the Capitol, plainly dressed with only a dash of gold eyeliner, rejecting all physical modifications that everyone in the Capitol has (Collins *Hunger Games* 63). His own alienation gives him the ability to know what Panem would want in a rebel leader, which is why he is successful with Katniss.

Cinna makes Katniss a cultural icon for Panem through making her celebrity image that of populous love. While using Debord's Thesis 61 to expand on, discuss, and dissect Andy Warhol's brand of celebrity and why that make his work more valuable, Kerrigan et. al explains,

“Warhol celebrities the stuff of consumer culture developing his own ‘trash aesthetics’; but also transformed icons into Icons through the processes of celebritisation” (1515). I do not discuss Warhol as this would go beyond the scope of this work, but Kerrigan et al.’s findings are useful for Thesis 61; “The agent of spectacle who is put on stage as a star is the opposite of an individual; he is clearly the enemy of his own individuality as of the individuality of others” (Debord 24). Taking Kerrigan et al. and Thesis 61 into account, Cinna uses a process similar to Warhol to create the Icon of the Mockingjay by making Katniss an “enemy of individuality” and stripping Katniss of her District individuality, and making this individuality a populous one. For the Quarter Quell, Cinna transforms Katniss’ wedding dress into the iconic image of the Mockingjay, “Katniss’s wedding dress is literally consumed by flames, leaving her in an exact replica that is also an entirely new version of her wedding dress” (Montz 145). The wedding dress should be personally connected to Katniss, it is not, it connects to the Mockingjay icon image because “love” is what started the revolt. Though Katniss’ image is partially based on the love story that she and Peeta have narrated into the Games to save themselves, this image evokes empathy for her, and by extension, the Districts. People fall in love, and people get married, no matter their class orientation in Panem. Love is banal, it happens all of the time, but it is still special because it is the meaning of humanity—it is what made Katniss a Victor in the Games and outside of the Games, and Cinna incorporates this in her image through costumes. Haymitch incorporates romantic love into Katniss’ image because they “eat that stuff up in the Capitol” (Collins *Hunger Games* 136), implying that citizens are so alienated from the concept of “love.” Like other emotions, “love” has become too abstract by being attached to media images (Debord 10), so now, Capitol citizens are eager to experience it, even if it is only

second hand through Katniss. Katniss' celebrity image has been made to be rebellion through "love," and it is all over her body in costume and the spectacular trappings used to help her "speak" to Panem.

Every time the Capitol and Panem consume Katniss, every time her ethos and pathos touches them, they are consuming rebellion. According to Debord, spectacle is supposed to manufacture feelings by attaching these feelings to objects and making them abstract to the point that nobody can grasp them or truly "own" them (Debord 19). Many scholars discuss Katniss' and Peeta's love story in terms of "hyperreal" (Gagnon 136) or "simulation" (Day 174), this work discusses it in terms of a narrative for establishing an image for her icon. Cinna and Flickerman created an image for all of Panem to identify with and consume, but since this love ended up being real, it became rebellious—he only wants to control Katniss' image and part of this is controlling how she expresses love. The first thing he controlled about her image was her love for Rue by censoring the public from her turning point in the Games when she went from Tribute to "human," properly burying Rue because she was a sister (Collins *Hunger Games* 363). Love between people from Districts is forbidden to happen because it would defeat the point of the Annual Hunger Games—to keep the Districts fighting each other through tactics of "divide and conquer" (Pavlik 31). Examining Katniss' actions from the "divide and conquer" perspective, having the Peacekeepers kill one person from Rue's family and one from Thresh's, while also forcing Katniss to rush into a marriage with Peeta, maintains the ideology behind the Games; only President Snow may decide their fates and only he is allowed to be magnanimous towards the Districts, any true love displayed or shown will be outright killed or stamped out to produce false consciousness.



By reducing Victors like Katniss down to just “Victors” under the control of President Snow, some of their political power is stripped because they have been socially reduced down to a roll with specific scripts—like a stereotype that exists to give the illusion that districts have some degree of control over their own situation through their victors. In their research on stereotypes in ideological system-justification, Jost and Banaji have taken the definitions of “false consciousness” from Cunningham, Eagleton, Elster, and Meyerson to understand it in the context of social psychology as “the holding of beliefs that are contrary to one’s personal or group interest and which thereby contribute to the maintenance of the disadvantaged position of the self or the group” (3). Though I am not discussing stereotyping within the *Hunger Games* trilogy, Jost and Banaji’s definition of “false consciousness” works well for this project because I discuss how Snow convinces the Districts that they have some control over their own lives if they win. Katniss’ statement about the “message” of the Hunger Games from the Capitol to the Districts, “Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there’s nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you” (Collins *Hunger Games* 19) becomes crucial: it is the whole reason why they have not fought back. Snow recognizes the challenge to his authority that the Districts would pose if they ever banded together against the Capitol, which is why the Districts are bombarded with images from the war, and subjected to the Games at all. As *Mockingjay*, Katniss must re-instate true class consciousness and de-alienate everyone from themselves and each other through selling *life* as the better alternative to the Hunger Games. These are the crucial non-material things that spectacle has robbed them of, which also explains Katniss’ popularity.

The selling of life over the spectacle of the Annual Hunger Games is the *Mockingjay*’s

goal, not the rebellion's. Snow gives Katniss the credence to be an authority figure for Panem through celebritisation, which is why he needs Peeta to publicly denounce her. However, Katniss is the figure of dissenting rebellion who was naturalized back into the mainstream culture, her credence is here to stay (Fiske 1271-1272). The rebels know this, which is why they have their own cosmetic team, and it includes Cinna's partner from the Capitol. Even the District rebels understand the importance of an icon's appearance and image. More importantly, going back to Debord's Thesis 12, the rebels understand how Snow has conditioned the populace into accepting anything on screen without question because they have been conditioned to do the same. Any time Alma Coin allows anything to be seen in District 13, it is a negative fact about the Capitol, and like Snow, she is dressed for the pomp and circumstance to convey authority further. This is why District 13 does not think to question if Peeta is actually speaking or if he was coerced by Snow to denounce Katniss, even Alma Coin, who initially wanted Peeta to be their Mockingjay, calls him a traitor (Collins *Mockingjay* 35). Katniss never trusted Coin, and the President's automatic condemnation is her first clue that Coin will be no better than the current dictator.

As Coin coerces Katniss into being their Mockingjay with promises that she will spare any and all survivors of the past Hunger Games trapped in the Capitol, the narrative begins to reveal how similar Coin is to Snow through their aesthetic. Just as Snow is remarked to be well dressed with a "fake smile," Coin is well dressed with a "unbroken sheet" of grey hair so perfect that it must be fake (Collins *Mockingjay* 12). Alma Coin's goal is more like that of Stalin's, "The industrialization of the Stalin era revealed the bureaucracy's ultimate function: continuing the reign of the economy by preserving the essence of market society: commodified labor" (Debord

51). This rebel leader is not much of a rebel at all, she is here to keep the status quo, Coin only wants the Capitol to feel what the Districts have been feeling for seventy-five years. She does not represent real revolution, she represents revenge and wants to use the Games to exact it year after year, exactly like Snow. Unlike Snow, she implies that she will not use it as a means to an end in itself, she intends to use it for a specific end for her revenge against the Capitol (Collins *Mockingjay* 267). Coin does not recognize that the Hunger Games are ideology made material (Debord 114), which led to her immediate demise, just like Snow when he created the Quarter Quell to specifically kill Katniss. Snow's demise at his own people's hands for using the Games to directly control Panem indicates that his personal use of the Games is what made them unacceptable. Coin's demise re-enforces this implication as Katniss executes her instead of Snow (Collins *Mockingjay* 268). Even more telling is the fact that the council elected after Coin's death refuses to release the dead dictator's plans because she never planned to shake up the system, Coin planned to re-make it in her image. Katniss remarks, "All those people I loved, dead, and we are discussing the next Hunger Games in an attempt to avoid wasting life. Nothing has changed. Nothing will ever change now" (Collins *Mockingjay* 267). Katniss realizes that if she wants the Hunger games to stay dead, then she will have to do something about it because these "rebels" were only more spectacle.

Coin's ultimate reveal in the end also reveals that the District 13 "rebels" were not actually rebels:

Stalin, like any other outmoded commodity, is now denounced precisely by the very forces that originally promoted him. Each *new lie* of the advertising industry is an *admission* of its previous lie. And with each downfall of a personification of totalitarian power, the *illusory community* that had unanimously approved him is exposed as a mere conglomeration of loners without illusions. (Debord 29)

Using Katniss the Mockingjay to defeat spectacle with spectacle becomes paradoxical as well when filming propaganda for District 13, Katniss reinforces the very system that she is trying to break. Katniss later figures out that District 13 was simply an illusion created by Coin, while the Districts fought each other, District 13 would remain untouched which would allow her to take Snow's power without question. When Katniss was approached to be the "mouthpiece" of District 13 it was not the rebellion that needed a voice, it was District 13's faux rebellion that needed the Mockingjay's voice of humanity and iconic image to legitimize Coin's power as that of the will of the Districts. Even Katniss realizes this to a certain extent, musing, "I must now become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution" (Collins *Mockingjay* 12). It is interesting here that Katniss fails to mention being part of District 13, and her inability to assimilate into the society, which places her at odds with Coin. Upon first meeting Katniss, Coin clearly did not want her to be their Mockingjay, "I told you we should have rescued the boy first" (Collins *Mockingjay* 12), and even Katniss agrees that Peeta would have made for a better "mouthpiece." President Coin understands the danger that Katniss could potentially pose to her new regime if she is not properly interpellated in as a sign of the old system approving of the new. Again, under Coin, Katniss would have continued spectacle through being a celebrity (Debord 24), and had she not killed Coin, the spectacle would have never ended as Coin would have maintained cyclical time, like Snow, through the Hunger Games. Katniss is the only true rebel figure in the trilogy because she is attempting to end the old spectacular economic system of production through restoring class consciousness by making historic, linear time available again to the Districts.

As this work has discussed many times, symbols are crucial to group identification and

interpellation, especially when two or more groups are in conflicting dissent from the dominant. With an established credence and rapport with the public that Flickerman and Snow both give her, the Mockingjay has the most of Fiske's social power (1268), which is translated into political power during the revolt; in Katniss' particular case, her social power comes from being a celebrity who is able to represent the entirety of Panem through symbols. Just as Rue trusted Katniss to be a "friend" because of the Mockingjay pendant, a sign of friendship in the Districts as Madge gives her this pendant as a token to remember that she has friends who care back in District 12, this sign comes to mean solidarity with Katniss and her cause to unite Panem against the Hunger Games. In her own article about Katniss and the significance of her symbols, Katheryn Hansen writes, "the trilogy also shows readers that it is Katniss' authentic choices, not a false persona, to which people most enthusiastically respond" (169), these authentic choices are all represented in her image as the Mockingjay.

All of these symbols of the Mockingjay also help develop linear class time, which is crucial to restoring class consciousness for the Districts. Katniss may not understand her popularity and how she is a symbol of hope for the oppressed because she cannot see the history that she has created after the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Katniss' relationship with Rue is what really turned her into the Mockingjay, "Her natural inclination to care for Rue gives rise to an anti-Capitol fury upon Rue's death, a 'fury against the cruelty, the injustice they inflict upon us' (*Games* 236)" (Hansen 169). While Hansen has a feminist approach by comparing Katniss to Artemis, I maintain a class conflict approach and claim that this Rue's death is the moment linear time was established for the Districts to agitate on. Adding to this "first" was then a series of other "firsts" in the Games, Katniss being

granted the loaf of bread for burying Rue (Collins *Hunger Games* 238). While this continues to speak of Katniss' humanity in the face of the inhumane, it is also the beginning of the destruction of false class consciousness that Snow had created because the Districts began to riot on one platform—the Games are unfair, and they only serve to keep the Districts starving for the Capitol's scraps. Since Flickerman performs Fiske's naturalization by making Katniss' iconic image socially acceptable, and now that Katniss is part of the Capitol's popular culture, she is now bound to its mass media; "Since popular culture today is so closely bound up with the mass media . . . it is almost impossible to look at one without the other" (Strinati xi). Katniss and her District ideology of inclusion and equality are everywhere because they are part of popular culture, and this makes her dangerous to Snow because her iconic image also creates a linear time.

President Snow and Flickerman unknowingly perpetuate this linear time and help Katniss obliterate the false consciousness of Panem when they try to have her killed. Snow thinks that his Quarter Quell is an ingenious plan to get rid of Katniss, and his media tries to spin it this way-- "these will be the best Games ever!" one announcer says after drying her tears (Collins *Catching Fire* 55)—but he has only succeeded in creating another "first." The Quarter Quell does the exact opposite of what Snow intended, cyclical time would have been re-established *if* Districts 1 or 2 won because it would have taken Panem back to the arrested time of the Games before Katniss and Peeta won; instead, it created another series of "firsts" that strips Snow of his ideological power as his populace is now rioting with the Districts. However, it is imperative to note that the Capitol is rioting because it does not want its celebrities taken away—a source of their entertainment—and not because they are truly "seeing" the humanity

in the celebrities for the first time. This is the first time that the Capitol will have to see its “beloved Victors” potentially die and never return to grace them with their presence on screen, which is why Cashmere and Gloss’s “parting speech” has Flickerman and the Capitol citizens in tears.

Gloss and Cashmere’s speech is more than just a parting speech, they are describing themselves in terms of a “commodity”; she emphasizes “how much the people in the Capitol must be suffering because they will lose [the Victors]” (Collins *Catching Fire* 71), her implication is that, as Victors, they have given the people in the Capitol much joy with their celebrity. Cashmere’s rhetorical question is terrible, but it is one of the only ways to get through to these people, she is asking “do you really want to see your favorite ‘toys’ die?.” Katniss also follows up with a description of herself as a commodity, “The sight of me in my white silk bridal gown practically causes a riot. No more me, no more star-crossed lovers living happily ever after, no more wedding” (Collins *Catching Fire* 72), or rather, she is commoditizing her life. Part of the joy for the Capitol is watching these “stars” grow up, and consuming their relatively more authentic lives, which is why Caesar Flickerman is even in tears (Collins *Catching Fire* 72). As this is Debord’s society that can only attach abstract meaning to objects or commodified people, instead of feeling the real emotion or satisfaction, having a beloved celebrity made to die in front of their eyes is an indignity to them, and they treat it as such. The Capitol has had enough as well as the Districts, and they are beginning to realize that the Games are cruel, even if they could only see it through Katniss’ fate and the threat that they will never get to see her romance play out in real life. Again, on Katniss’ body here is a reminder of the linearity of time, her wedding dress indicates a future that she should have, but will not because she is a sacrifice

to the spectacle. The Capitol's indignation and Snow's response to this indicates that Katniss has just restored class consciousness to the Capitol as well. Then this means that when Snow ordered Capitol children to the gates with promises of "safekeeping" (Collins *Mockingjay* 249), he actually kept the children during the rebellion as insurance for himself.

Throughout the rebellion, Katniss proves herself most useful on the ground among the rebels because her iconic image is a constant reminder to the rebels that they are fighting for something that can be won. If the Girl on Fire can defeat the odds and survive, then they can too, which is why Cinna tells Katniss that he is "still betting on [her]" (Collins *Mockingjay* 37). This is why Katniss, and Katniss alone, was able to convince District 2 to rebel with them, she represents more than just humanity in an inhumane world. When the unrelenting District 2 asked her why they should not kill her, hand her to Snow, and stop the war, Katniss believes that she cannot come up with a legitimate answer, but she does; "When I saw that mountain fall tonight, I thought . . . they've done it again. Got me to kill you — the people in the districts. But why did I do it? District Twelve and District Two have no fight except the one the Capitol gave us." (Collins *Mockingjay* 158). Katniss' "humanity" is actually the true critique that Debord said would take down spectacle (Debord 117) and it has now become part of *Mockingjay* ideology. This true critique, like the others, endears Katniss to those who may resist her because she is doing exactly for the rebellion what Flickerman was trained to do, except, she is truly breaking down events. Katniss is telling District 2 that they have no fight with each other than the fight that Snow has manufactured for them, and the only reason behind the fighting and the killing is to keep the same oppressive system stable and going, which is why only President Snow ever wins the Games. This is also why Coin recognizes Katniss as a threat



to her regime, and tries to have her killed in a martyred fashion so that she may claim this icon for herself. If Coin had succeeded, her reign may have been forever solidified through owning Katniss' image since Katniss fought for the rebellion and gave them her image as she participated in propaganda sent out to the Capitol.

The way in which Snow's power rose and fell in Panem illustrates how spectacle can implode on itself through the very mechanisms that keep it in power. The ISAs that Snow had built, as the State of Panem, to keep his own power dominant were the key to his hegemonic power over the culture as well as his downfall. As Althusser predicted, the ISAs ended up being the most heavily contested area of the rebellion (Althusser 99) as every front fought for airtime, and the ability to manipulate this spectacular "reality" for their own ends. From Snow, to Katniss, to Flickerman, to Coin, every "interpreter" of ideology warred as much through spectacle as they did in physical reality. Interestingly though, none of these players won the war, and that is exactly the way that it should be. Debord did theorize that to get rid of spectacle, *all* remnants of spectacle must go (Debord 117), and this includes the Mockingjay, the last vestige of Snow's oppressive system. Understanding the *Hunger Games* trilogy in this way, then Amy Montz is wrong, Katniss is not returning to District 12 as punishment for killing Coin (146), nor is she returning so that she may be "healed" by home (Hanlon 67); she is finally going "home" in order to become human again, to live life without the constant threat of her image commodified for violent entertainment.

## CONCLUSION

The Hunger Games, as an extreme example of a central mass media ISA that has completely taken over the economic system and colonized all of life in Panem to the point that everyone has lost humanity. As Beetee and Gale Hawthorne also become so wrapped up in their roles as “rebels” in the spectacle, they murder innocent children and their own forces by “accident” (Collins *Mockingjay* 261). Like Snow, Coin never lies to her people, she only keeps information from them and her end-game ambiguous, until now. When she reveals her plans for the 76<sup>th</sup> “final Hunger Games,” she accidentally revealed her plan, revenge—and as Snow tells Katniss, Coin will never stop (Collins *Mockingjay* 257) because she is exactly like him, and only plans to take his place. The spectacle will never end, especially if Katniss publicly executes Snow as the Mockingjay icon because the spectacle is an RSA that also grants Katniss legitimacy, and vice-versa; Snow’s feedback system of celebrity, ISAs, and RSAs in spectacle are still in place, only a new dictator is in charge. To cement the change in power, Katniss signals her acceptance of Coin’s rule as legitimate by performing this execution. However, Katniss has re-course because Debord’s thesis, everything that appears is good (Debord 4), has been shown to work both ways in Panem—for the rebels and against them; and for Snow and against him. Katniss’ solution to the new problem? Execute Coin and let the angry mob tear Snow to shreds. In one move, Katniss obliterates the society of spectacle, or at least, the one which Panem has known for almost a century. Thus, Debord’s final thesis is realized:

This ‘historic mission of establishing truth in the world’ can be carried out neither by the isolated individual nor by atomized and manipulated masses, but only and always by the class that is able to dissolve all classes by reducing all power to the de-alienating form of realized democracy—to councils in which practical theory verifies itself and surveys its own actions. (Debord 117).

After Coin's execution, a republic is created and a democratic council elected rebel leader of District 8, Commander Paylor, to become the new President of the New Panem (Collins *Mockingjay* 272). This is the best outcome for the proletariat Districts because District 8 has no previously established ties to the old spectacle. In addition, they are not the same rebels that District 13 was—they are not faux rebels simply trying to install their own dictatorship president. Under Paylor, the sites of the old games are turned into memorials, as they should be (Collins *Mockingjay* 281), instead of the theme park attractions that they used to be (Day 176). With the borders now open as well, classes have, for all intents and purposes, been erased, though Katniss goes back to her petite bourgeoisie home in District 12, a reminder that she had to be part of bourgeoisie spectacle in order to end it all. The Capitol citizens and District citizens are integrating into all of Panem as one—*true* unity now—because the old economic model that determined their place in Panem no longer exists. This universal history has now begun for Panem in the sense that a new world with the promise of more equality has emerged. The key to getting to this point though was destroying *anything and everything* that kept the old economic model of the spectacular Annual Hunger Games perpetuated, which includes getting rid of the Mockingjay.

Ultimately, I posit that if Katniss had not been forcefully thrown back to District 12 and stripped of the Mockingjay, she would have remained the Mockingjay forever. If this had happened, spectacle would have never died. As previously stated, Katniss believed herself to be a free agent in a world where she was not; she still ended up a piece in someone's game, this time, it was President Coin's game. After executing Coin for killing Prim during her spectacular takeover of the Capitol by making it seem as if Snow was murdering his own citizens, Katniss

losses all will to live because she is lost to the Mockingjay—spectacle took her too.

When Debord says that part of emancipating oneself from spectacle is to bring about the “historic mission of establishing truth in the world” (117), he means that false consciousness must be corrected, and this cannot happen if spectacle still exists. And when he says that emancipation requires everyone to be “directly linked to universal history” (Debord 117), he is referring to how the spectacle stops time. Spectacle and its alienation of everyone from everything and the self, is inherently at odds with true “real conditions” and reality of the producers; “In both form and content the spectacle serves as a total justification of the conditions and goals of the existing system” (Debord 3). Therefore, in order for Thesis 221 to be realized, along with Katniss’ goal of ridding Panem of the Hunger Games, was for the Mockingjay to disappear along with the spectacle. The novel even recognizes this in both story and narrative as readers received a Walden-esque description of Katniss’ return to District 12.

Greif stricken for the first time in the novel, Katniss goes through the rubble and reminisces of all that she has lost in the war. She even takes time to mourn Madge Hayes, “Madge. Quiet and kind and brave. The girl who gave me the pin that gave me a name. I swallow hard. Wonder if she’ll be joining the cast of my nightmares tonight” (Collins *Mockingjay* 277). Readers should take note that all technology disappears from the story and the narrative for the first time. Katniss no longer needs *things* to survive the world, she needs *people* and her memories of them to survive. “What I need is the dandelion in the spring. The bright yellow that means rebirth instead of destruction. The promise that life can go on, no matter how bad our losses. That it can be good again. And only Peeta can give me that” (Collins *Mockingjay* 280). Some feminist scholars take issue with this line because of its implication that

only Peeta can make her life meaningful again<sup>11</sup>. While I do not deny this, I would offer a more nuanced ending with a close focus on Katniss' words. Katniss' constant reference of the color "yellow" as meaning "rebirth" and "life" are directly related to Prim and Rue<sup>12</sup>, both of whom Peeta went out of his way to honor in various ways when Katniss was too swept up in spectacle to do so. Giving Rue's family shares of food (Collins *Catching Fire* 17), painting the way Katniss lovingly "buried" Rue in flowers from the 74<sup>th</sup> Hunger Games to make the Gamemakers feel "accountable" (Collins *Catching Fire* 68), and in the final installment, he helps her make a book of memories for all who fell in the rebellion. Peeta uses his artistry to paint moments of these people in portraits, while Katniss uses her historical memory to fill in the rest (Collins *Mockingjay* 279). This is a return to a truly united front, the false front that Katniss and Peeta tried to give the audience in the Hunger Games has finally become a true front in the sense of partnership.

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<sup>11</sup> In "The Incompatibility of Female Friendships and Rebellion," Childs takes issue with how overrepresented heterosexual relationships are within texts like *The Hunger Games* as it appears to her that fiction, "for the male protagonist, saving the day is the ultimate goal, and he is rewarded his love interest for successfully doing so" (199)

<sup>12</sup> "Rue is a small yellow flower that grows in the Meadow. Rue. Primrose." (Collins *Catching Fire* 99)

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